

Victory Through MARY



FRANK DUFF

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LEGION OF MARY
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Cover image is designed by Gerald O'Byrne. D. March 1964. A well-known legionary artist whose distinctive work has on many occasions adorned our publications. The image depicts the twelve Apostles and Our Lady in the Cenacle, gathered around a map of the world for the purpose of allocating the districts to the Apostles, who will bear the responsibility of delivering the gospel.

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VICTORY THROUGH MARY

The Human Mind

I am going to discuss with you that inscrutable mystery, the human mind. It is the topic of the day. Psychiatrists swarm like flies and apparently, every one without exception is a subject for their care. By reason of all the attention, which the mind has been receiving for a long time past, one would imagine that it should have yielded up its secrets and that by now it would have been brought to a great state of perfection. Yet I do not think that there is justification for the common belief that the brain has become a more subtle instrument than it used to be, and that the ancients were less able thinkers than the moderns. Read the very oldest classics and you must be convinced that the essential thought-power in them – as apart from the gloss, which more advanced knowledge would have added in – is just as intense as it would be today.

Brain Power in Evidence down the Ages

Of course a development has been at work throughout the ages. We know much more than the ancients by virtue of the fact that man stands upon the shoulders of the men who went before him. He may add to what he receives but

he depends on his predecessors. Also, education is widely spread; people read, and in general brains are busier than they would be in less advanced conditions. But this is a different thing from an actual improvement in the quality of the brain itself. We must distinguish between essential quality and activity.

Furthermore we must not let the present-day brilliant show of scientific discovery cause us to imagine that the ancients were benighted people in comparison to ourselves. Considering their equipment, which according to our standards was nil, they achieved sensational results. Starting from nothing, they dug astonishingly deep into the laws and secrets of nature. A thousand years before Copernicus they had got as far as he subsequently did. They knew of the atom. We talk about our plastics; they invented glass which is the most significant plastic of them all. Many of the things, which are at the foundation of mathematics and science were devised by those same ancients. So it would be impossible, I think, to compare the relative achievements and then to decide that the quality of the brain of man has improved or disimproved with the passage of time. I suppose that the position is that it remains the same in spite of the appearance of development. Knowledge is not quality. For instance the average person today knows more about the functioning of electricity than Michael Faraday who pioneered that science. But that person has not Faraday's brains.

Who can assess the wonders of the intellect which can penetrate into the most complicated operations of nature and then put them into the daily service of man; which can steer men to the moon, put them on it, and bring them back home with luggage which they had picked up there; and which can distinguish between and harness

We Must Know Edel Quinn

This talk has been given the title: 'We must know Edel Quinn'. This brings the question: Why must we know her? It is because she brings spiritual stimulation to everyone who learns something about her. In fact people seem to become interested at the very mention of her name. She has a distinctiveness of her own among those who have been acclaimed as in the order of sanctity. It is hard to put one's finger on the precise cause of this influence. If I were forced to pick something, I think I would say that it is her modernity. She strikes that note firmly, and yet she died in 1944 which seems like an age ago.

Likewise she exercises an extraordinarily wide appeal, seeming to have a message for many classes. She was an invalid who held her illness at bay for sufficient years to stage one of the unique achievements in history. I knew a doctor who ordered a book on the life of Edel Quinn to be given to a patient who had lost the power to fight through. The patient read the book and spirit came back. I would believe that Edel would work the same psychology

on every sick person. The moral would seem to be that they should receive the same prescription.

A Compelling Example for Men and Women

What is every missionary likely to feel who studies Edel? Taking into account the health angle, it seems to me that it would be impossible to set before them a loftier, more compelling, more galvanic headline.

All the feminine virtues shine forth in her. She was as remote as she could be from being a mannish woman, but she was able to teach men in lines that are supposed to be their own. She was able to command their respect, their devotion, their obedience. It would be wise for women in authority, especially the Legion where they enjoy plenty of it, to analyse Edel from this latter point of view. How did she exercise her remarkable sway without riling the men? And we must add, the women too. It is easy to answer by saying that it was her modest manner, but that answer would only skim the surface.

And of course every legionary owes it to himself and his membership to try to discover her secret. For she was a total product of the Legion, one might say the quintessence of it. I explain that this word represents the process of ultra-refining. In a strange way she stands for the Legion boiled down into a person. If you can understand her and imitate her, you have certainly got to the heart of the Legion. And never forget that the Legion has been paid one of the most exquisite compliments ever uttered. Pope John said that it represents the true face of the Catholic Church.

She Was Genuine

One has not to probe deep into her to be favourably impressed. Her beauty and charm confronted you straight

away. But here I have to make some reservations. Her beauty was of a delicate order, and her charm was not a mere glamour; neither was it a veneer or the product of deliberate care. There was not a trace of the artificial about her. And possibly in this we are touching bedrock, getting near to what counted most in her. When she stood there before you, you knew that you were not looking at an unreality. You were not going to be treated to a salesman's approach. She was what she looked. She was genuine.

As we now know, the element of character was always in her. Her parents discerned it from her earliest age. Perhaps its first decisive dawning was when reverses came to her family. She did not indulge in any childish bemoaning's over the cutting short of her education. She knew what she wanted to do. She went home to Ireland and got a job to produce the money which was needed.

Wooed but Not Won

This landed her into her one-sided love adventure. It was not on her side but on that of her young and very worthy French employer who was completely smitten by her. This might have developed naturally but for the fact that her mind was already, so to speak, booked. The intention to become a Poor Clare, when circumstances permitted, was already in possession.

It was about then that the Legion presented itself to her. You probably know the story, but it must be repeated for it is intrinsic to the picture. She met a girlhood friend and invited her home. The other could not come on the evening proposed because it was her Legion of Mary meeting.

Legion of Mary! What is that? Those few words and the explanation which they produced changed Edel's life and

the lives of many; made her a world force and a legend. We may confidently hope that the culmination will be the Church's seal of sanctity. The important Vatican official who is guiding her Cause wrote recently: I never work on her papers without rising up refreshed anew by the inspiration of this wonderful life.

Appointment with Destiny

What is the Legion? That question brought her to her first Legion meeting, which according to her own declaration suddenly set before her eyes what she had unconsciously been looking for. But she did not realise that it was the most important moment of her life. Her destiny offered itself. She accepted it and adhered to it with a complete conviction. And she never looked back.

After some time word came to us of this young girl whose spirit was unusual. We had not yet met her. We sent for her and chatted for an evening. She exhibited no sign of delicacy and she did justify the good report about her. Our verdict was 'first class'. Just about then word came along that the Praesidium which visited the low-down women's lodging houses required a president, who had to be 'quite super-duper' as the current slang puts it. Edel was sent to it. Her arrival caused shock. The members concealed this but got together after the meeting. Then they commissioned their Spiritual Director, the late Dr Dempsey to go to headquarters to protest against a child being sent to lead them. He did this and then reported back that he had cut no ice, but he had been told that they would soon find out how lucky they were. And this they did in due course.

Then – like a thunderclap came her failure in health. Her stay in the Sanatorium, her resumption of work, her

Welsh expedition – and Africa. All so brimful of interest and lessons. For these I pass you over to Cardinal Suenens' book¹, which is a masterpiece, commended by the popes themselves.

Africa Odyssey Which Reverberated in China

The journey of a thousand leagues, says the phrase, begins with a single step. The step of joining the Legion took her off on a Peregrinatio for souls which covered many thousands leagues, led her to Africa, made her a missionary to missionaries; and enabled her to expand to her full dimension. Nor was it Africa alone which was to be the beneficiary. Cardinal Riberi explains this when he says that: Lost in the depths of the African jungle she was affecting the religious history of China. She furnished the inspiration which launched the latest bid so far for the conversion of that most populous country in the world.

For sheer faith, courage, patience, cheerfulness, zeal and every other quality which one might write down, her African journey places her beside the great saints of history. And perhaps even among that distinguished company she was unique. Not so many of them produced such a multiplication of energy and activity out of such meagre physical resources.

Every step she took must have required conscious effort. Yet in a state of weakness which was permanent and in an exacting climate she worked incessantly. Though she began her day more tired than most people finish it, nothing daunted her; nothing cast a shadow on her cheerful demeanour.

1 Leon-Joseph Suenens, *Edel Quinn: Envoy of the Legion of Mary to Africa*, Dublin: C J Fallon, 1955.

If at intervals her onward march was interrupted, it was because her body could no longer respond to her will. Too many moments could be applied those words she used: 'It is not that I will not but that I cannot.'

As an episode of frightening quality, I recall that time when nature broke and she lay helplessly in bed. But word came that a bishop whom she wished to see had just returned to his territory. It accomplished the impossible. She rose and travelled one hundred miles to see him. Then back to bed and renewed collapse. But for how long? Not too long, for the moment life would begin to stir in her again, that peremptory march would be resumed.

Faith and Firmness but No Hardness

But here I pause, because in spite of my intention I may be projecting a false image of Edel. This could easily arise from the over-stressing of a particular aspect to the detriment of the others. Perhaps I may have been painting the picture for you of a woman of iron will, hard on herself and on everyone else, defying nature and pushing mountains out of the way. That would not be an attractive rendering of our subject, and it would be far removed from the truth.

There was no hardness in Edel even though there was principle and firmness. In fact, I think it could be said that she was not deliberately hard even on herself, and unquestionably she was not hard on others. I think that she trod her severe ways out of love and not out of penance, and that love after faith was the great ingredient in her. Furthermore, in the overcoming of her physical deficiencies she did not have to do the degree of violence to herself which we might be led to imagine. As I guess at what was taking place, she was powerfully driven on by a set of motives and these almost took over from her

will. She wanted to do things which others have to force themselves to do. What was bright and attractive to her could be repellent to us. In the generality of people the supernatural has to struggle for its due place. In her I do not think that such was the case. She realised God easily and clearly. She loved Jesus and Mary with every fibre in her, and she passionately sought after what she thought they wanted. It is complimentary to the Legion, and a sort of guarantee of it, that her whole mind accepted it from the moment she saw it. It represented for her a code of thought and method according to which Jesus and Mary wanted her to operate. Especially it taught her the doctrines of the Mystical Body and Our Lady's motherhood of grace. She dwelt on these until they became the atmosphere of her soul.

Alleged Imprudence

She referred to Jesus and Mary every idea which presented itself. As a consequence her mental processes and decisions were good and sure. There did not seem to be any arraying of motives. No struggle took place. The selfish or improper appeared to perish in its very birth. But if it were a holy thought, even one hurtful to nature, it was alluring to her. Sometimes it swept her away. This explains her alleged imprudence.

There did not seem to be the play of fear and it was impossible to say if she was moved by the ordinary likes and dislikes. The emotions must have been strong in her, because of the acute sensitivity of her nervous system. But all that was kept in its place without trouble so far as one could judge. She had a great love for her family and for her friends, but when the moment came she left everybody without any intention of ever seeing them again.

But why? Would it not be laudable to pay a visit, which they and she would so much desire? Here another consideration enters in. She was not advancing in health as she left us to suppose. She was losing ground all the time and she feared that if she made that joyous homecoming, she would not be permitted to go out again. So she put the happy prospect from her as if it were no better than a temptation.

You will recall the episode of the exhaustion of the petrol in the jungle. Her driver went off on a trek to try to get some. Returning after being a long time away, he must have been expected to find her in utter panic. No, she was working away on her correspondence and she greeted him with her usual smile. There could be only one explanation for that effortless control; the heavenly Ones were with her and there was no room for the weak thoughts.

Some might see here that note of the inhuman which I have already repudiated. Certainly there would be few on earth who could maintain so resolute a course. But it was what the compass of her soul indicated to her, and everything had to yield to that bidding.

Utterly Considerate of Others

One theorist said that she showed inconsiderateness in moving about for nearly eight years with her lungs in such a bad state. The inference was that she was casting infection around. Actually it has never been suggested that anyone who was in touch with her contracted that disease. She herself must have had some inner light on the point because if she had believed she was a danger to others she would have retreated into a desert.

I would declare that considerateness for others was a basic ingredient in her. I simply could not imagine her as

displaying the slightest degree of want of consideration for anyone. In the interview which Cardinal Suenens had with all the members of her family, he asked the question: What was her special characteristic? The mother replied unhesitatingly; 'Her unselfishness'. The cardinal then enquired at what age this had begun to manifest itself. The mother's answer was that it was there from her earliest days. The cardinal demurred, remarking that very young children were selfish little animals who had to learn correct values from the adults. At this the whole family united in the insistence that they had never known Edel to be anything but unselfish.

There is a story which illustrates another aspect of her. It was before her envoyship, when she had broken down and was in the sanatorium. A patient had died unexpectedly during the night and the young nurse in charge rushed for help to Edel who was in bed asleep, instead of her more obvious recourse, the matron. There is a strange significance in this. Edel was the thought which rose instinctively in the mind of the startled young nurse. But the same feature was found in her parents who always took her into council in the family emergencies.

Joy unto Merriment

What was she like in company? It would be a total error to think that she was a damper. The opposite was the case. She exercised the effect of putting other people into good form. Her sweet personality poured itself out and produced a benign atmosphere. I cannot recall an occasion when a group of which she was part was glum or disorientated – by which I mean at a loss. They would always know what to do, and moreover the tendency was towards cheerfulness and even merriment.

It was not that she forced herself on the attention. She did not. She never sought to assert herself. She spoke little, perhaps less than anyone else. It was a case of a happy, holy personality shining forth; sending out influential rays.

I think it could be said that there was no time when humour was completely turned off in her. It even showed itself in what she thought was her last moment when Bishop Julien told of the splendid funeral which he would arrange for her. She astonished him by laughing heartily.

There was that other precious tale of the cow. It was her practice when moving on from one village to another to offer a lift to anyone who needed to go. Someone wanted to send a cow. An hour or two was consumed in the catching of the nimble animal which was then bound down in the car trailer. On arrival over a cup of tea, Edel explained to the missionary what was entailed in the starting of the Legion. In mock dismay he raised his hands to Heaven and exclaimed: 'Why had that cow to come to this place?' 'Father,' replied Edel in her typical manner, 'you are making a mistake, it was not the cow which brought me. It was I who brought the cow.'

A Sense of Urgency

Everyone felt the radiation from her. People were half won over just at seeing her, before she spoke at all. Her course was one of conquest. A particularly effective section of the Suenens' Life is where a succession of places through which she had passed is given. They were very varied in type and no doubt the missionaries had very different outlooks. So each new stop meant a fresh problem. But the result was the same in every case. The Legion was started. But at what a price. The grinding work of talking

and persuading and instructing would be completed, and there would be no period of relaxation. The next place was waiting and urgency was the note. But why? What was the deadline? Nothing could be more grimly appropriate than this latter conventional expression. For she felt her hour was near and she wanted to squeeze in a few more places. How many would she have time for? Yet no place was caused to feel that it was dealing with a worn-out person. For each she had the same brightness and interest, just as if it were the only one.

But of course that could only end up in one way. That list of places ended in Lilongwe where the missionary received the envoy whom he had heard was heading in his direction. He was looking forward to seeing her. Greetings fulfilled, she began to explain her mission. But he was looking rather than listening, and looking with consternation. 'Miss Quinn,' he interjected, 'do you not realise that you are dying? You should be preparing for it instead of going about like this.'

He was right. She was on the point of death. As if his words were the signal, she collapsed. Then followed the extraordinary episode of the bishop coming down to say Mass for her and telling her that he would see that she got the funeral of the great apostle that she was. Yet she survived and lived on to accomplish a second stage of her incredible performance.

A Completely Normal Person

But once again I am afflicted with the misgiving that I have been exhibiting to you a figure larger than life and that your reaction may be that of thinking that there is exaggeration. Or else that Edel was a super human figure who forms no example for us. As to that I do not think I have been

exaggerating. I have been just telling you the things that have been certified in respect to her and which are standing up to the critical examination of Rome itself. Therefore they are accurate; there is no adornment of the tale. Does that then indicate that she was a super human figure?

Here I am going to be venturesome and to claim that she was a completely normal person; that she was originally endowed with much the same set of qualities that any really well inclined person possesses, and no more. Is it the inference that any person as devoted as she could do as well? Let us look at this intriguing question.

Edel showed none of that formidable aspect in the earlier stages of her life. I would not claim that she was of superior intelligence or exhibiting qualities which would inspire observers. When she became a self-supporting individual she did not give herself to devotion or to higher pursuits. She indulged in the usual after-work occupations with the extra one of helping in the girls' club. In that there was nothing to suggest the superwoman and it must be remembered that Mona Tierney, viewing the Edel of that time, judged her as unlikely to make a legionary. But in the twinkling of an eye Edel assumed the complexion which afterwards she bore. The cause was her entry into the Legion. Therefore it was a new set of motives and not any great quality of genius or abnormal ability which were subsequently set at work in her. What happened was that she opened herself fully to what the Legion offered her. Then grace began to operate. There was a process of visible, even sensational growing.

Perseverance in Unlimited Giving

Nowhere did she interpose a barrier. Never did she say: enough! So she continued to go until necessarily she achieved that stature which we call superhuman, where

her will, her judgement, her devotion, her intelligence, and everything else in her looks bigger than, and beyond nature.

But it resolves itself down to cheerful, unlimited giving and persevering to the end. To others who would similarly give without stint, the same would be available. So it would be a fatal mistake to remove her from the common category and to dub her a saint, meaning thereby that she is outside our ken.

Reflecting Mary, Presenting Jesus

All that stated, the fact remains that Edel through her policy of never holding anything back from Jesus and Mary did achieve what looks like the superhuman. And surely it has to be admitted that in her African adventure Edel touched heights which baffle us. We cannot see how they could be surpassed. As she unceasingly moved along the highways and byways and out to the ends of the jungle paths of her continent, might it not be thought that everything about her would be befitting of the behaviour of even Our Blessed Lady herself.

Our Lady was the habitation of the Holy Spirit, but she did not transcend the limitations of the human state. She was inconspicuous and unassuming. But now that she is in Heaven it is to be her purpose to project herself through those who serve her, even to the extent of making them veritable transcripts of herself. The lives of the saints are full of instances where sometimes they become transfigured with the appearances of Jesus and Mary. So would it not be quite permissible to modify that exclamation of St Paul and place it on Edel's lips: 'I am trying to give Jesus to the people, no, not I, it is his mother who is using me to give him.'

Religion in the

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Descending

tles was that they were to go present the Gospel to every d was that it would in fact be rld and that the majority of me of the disciples believed ery soon for they thought the ver a long period of centuries g out. Christianity steadily

advanced. Europe, which constituted the influential centre of the world, became Christian. I think that the statistics, which were based on guesswork for most of the world, declared that at one time forty per cent of it was Christian. At a point this figure began to descend. The official figure for Catholicism today is sixteen per cent. If the graph which has obtained for some time passed be maintained, Catholicism will have shrunk to five per cent by the year 2000 without visible prospect of improvement.

Of course this does not mean that the actual number of Christians is diminishing, but only their proportion to the total population of the world. This has not altered the menace of the position, which is that the supposition that Christianity would eventually absorb most of the world population has not been justified. When the 21st Century dawns, only twenty four years away, the prospect of Christianity as a world-force will be at a low ebb.

The Other Religions to Fare even Worse

But still worse, I would say, would be the prospects of the other formal religions; such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The two latter have no philosophic substance. Hinduism suffers from having too many strange gods; Buddhism has too few – in point of fact none; it is not a Deism. These religions could not withstand the blow-lamp of clever materialistic thought which will be turned on them by the diffusion of education which will be a feature of the century we are considering.

What about Islam, which of late has been the fastest growing religion in the world and which has already twice in history offered a military threat to Europe? I would not be impressed by its religious prospects. It is an amalgam of Judaism, Christianity and local lore. Its holy book, the

Koran, bears no sort of comparison to the New Testament. I have been through it many times and I have found no elevating note in it and not a trace of inspiration. In private conversation individual Moslems will admit as much. Kemal Ataturk, the Turkish leader, said that Islam was a blighting force. I am convinced that the influences which will reign in the 21st Century will prove too much for Islam.

The Jews exhibit the most melancholy picture of all, faith in a personal Messiah and even in God having entered into an almost total eclipse. At the moment they seem to be a supreme anomaly, a people with the mark of destiny still written on them and yet without the slightest hope of achieving it within themselves. As a religious force in the next century they can be written off completely though they will continue to live on.

An up-to-date manifestation has been the zeal shown by the American fringe religions, in particular the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons. Every land is today the scene of their missionary efforts and they are definitely growing. Does the future lie in their hands? I could not possibly think so. They contradict too many of the things which we would expect to find in revealed truth. Their origins were unsatisfactory, in fact sinister. Their originators were below par and, as Augustine Birrell said: 'We like our religious reformers to be saints.' Their doctrines are alien to good sense. For instance their idea of the future life would be perilously near to our idea of Hell. We cannot discern in their adherents what we could truly call a spirituality. It is not possible to make a guess as to their eventual fate. Will they even last into the 21st Century?

The foregoing effort at valuation appears to point to Christianity as the only thinkable exponent of revealed religion in future centuries.

Protestantism in Difficulties

Where in this setting is normal Protestantism to be placed? I would view it with being faced with special difficulties. It began by basing itself upon the Bible as the inspired, unerring word of God. But from roughly the beginning of the 20th Century in general has receded from that position. Moreover the theory of private interpretation by the aid of the Holy Spirit has worked out to fissuring on the widest possible scale, so that every section from Anglicanism to the Jehovah Witnesses is found claiming scriptural authority.

This would seem to present Protestantism to the 21st Century as a philosophy of complete freedom of opinion. This might be thought to have an attraction for the modern mind which resents control and which in particular dislikes what it calls an institutional Church. It contends that rules and regulations hamper the free movement of the spirit. To this I might interpose the comment that the removal of the skeleton from the human body would likewise make it more flexible.

No individual body can claim to represent Protestantism as a whole. In what way therefore will it present itself to the 21st Century? Under what title will it display itself? How will it explain itself and propagate itself and how will a disputed point be decided?

Protestants Unite – at a Price

Protestantism sees all this clearly. In its chief fields it is crying to unite. Here and there sections have come together but only to have fissure occur somewhere else. In the end things remain the same. Furthermore that unity where it was attained would often be at the expense of principle. One example of this would be the formation of the Church of South India.

Now suppose the South India fusion to be secured throughout all Protestantism during the next twenty-four years, so that their Church stands united under the name Christian when the new century opens. What are its doctrines going to be? Remember that it will face the most intellectual, critical, sophisticated, cynical, disillusioned audience that has ever existed. The acid of all that will be poured searingly into every inconsistency and chink.

Surely the lowest common denominator for the recognition of a religion as genuinely Christian would require a belief in the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and in the Virgin Birth? But is that enough? What about the Resurrection and Ascension? And what of Original Sin, of the Angels, of Hell? For 1,400 years those doctrines were regarded by all as essential Christianity. What proportion of the members of that new united Christian Church is likely to accept them?

Catholicism's Grip on Doctrine

On the other hand, Catholicism apart altogether from any question of its being true, has shown its capacity to preserve its deposit of doctrine. This does not mean that it has always been able to preserve all its members in that belief. There has always been at work since the very first days a process of attrition whereby individuals and even great sections have not accepted the full deposit and have opted out. In earlier days the Church tried to resist this and persecuted in the frantic effort to retain them.

A peculiarity attaching to the present crisis is that the dissidents are holding on like grim death to the Church instead of, as in former times, going forth to form their own division. Today they are determined not to go. Why is this?

But why does the Church continue to harbour those persons who defy it and deny its doctrines? It has always been the practice to argue things out with dissenters and to give them the fullest opportunity to cool down and change their minds. This can be successful, as has been seen with kidnappers. But some day the final act of exclusion has to be proceeded to.

I return to the theme that the Catholic Church has for twenty centuries succeeded in keeping its deposit of doctrine intact. There is no reason to suppose that it will not continue to do so during the 21st Century and after. This would exhibit it as the Rock of the Ages which if for no higher reason than the psychological would make its position unique for those who are attracted by a concrete and unchanging teaching. Scripture refers to the city set upon a hill which all men can see.

A Billion New Members

Actually I am going to suggest that the middle of the 21st Century may swell the Church's ranks to the extent of perhaps a billion new members. This audacious idea harks back to what I have already said about popular education having become general by that time, so that Islam and the Eastern Religions will begin to disintegrate. Unhappily materialism will inherit the greater part of the orphans. I am bold enough to think that Catholicism will get a quarter or a third. Many may think that it is fanciful and even ludicrous to suggest that an exacting religion like Catholicism would thus appeal to whole continents desolated by the fall of their own religions. To show that there is method in my madness I give the following items of recent history. These are of such an unexpected and dynamic character as to be like a

searchlight cast into that obscure future into which we are peering.

Jesus and China

Japan, a traditional enemy of Christianity, found itself in the 1930s threatened by a landslide towards materialism. It set up a Royal Commission with the mandate of saving the country from that fate. After many years of devoted investigation, the commission reported.

First: that the fear was a fact; that soon an alien and distasteful spirit would possess the land.

Second: that the only force which could resist materialism was religion, but that the native religions did not have sufficient substance so that efforts to revive them would be labour lost.

Third: that they had analysed and seen at work every recognised form of religion in the world; and they had finally concluded that of all forms Catholicism had the greatest influence over the mind of man, and that on the whole it was a beneficial influence.

Fourth: it recommended that Catholicism be imposed by law on the people of Japan.

This surprising report was adopted by the government with the exception that legal force must not be used. Catholicism would be named the most favoured religion, to be propagated by all reasonable means.

The first steps towards the implementing of that plan were taken, but the outbreak of war put a stop to it.

Another example: In 1950s the Chinese government, after showing less than no consideration for its native religions, proposed to constitute Catholicism as the Church of China. But excessive caution on their part modified this into a State Church with the Pope at its

head. This was unacceptable to the Catholic authorities and the scheme failed. The Government went ahead with its plan and was boycotted by the Catholics. The State Church has some small degree of diffusion.

I am not suggesting that in either of those instances the government believed in Christianity as a divine revelation. The idea probably went no further than to recognise it as the best ethic. But its establishment as the state religion would give full scope to the Christian teachers to present it in its fullness. In fact, both of those propositions did envisage the papacy and the entire Catholic system.

In my thought I would credit the present enlightened rulers of India as desiring to see their country Christian, though they would not dare to say it at the moment.

Protestant Headmistress Speaks Her Mind

Many years ago, Dr Henrietta White, the Headmistress of Alexandra College was addressing some special gathering in connection with the college. As I heard the account, she stated that the faith of their people was visibly declining and that a crisis was ahead. She recommended as a remedy that they should discuss religion with Roman Catholics and read Catholic spiritual books. She realised that this would result in a number of losses in favour of Catholicism, but she felt that the faith of their own body would be reinforced. This from an acute observer was a compliment to Catholicism.

That crisis point has now arrived. The heads of the Church of Ireland look with fear on the position. They do not think their Church is even going to see the 21st Century.

Of course this could represent a merely local phenomenon. A Church could become extinct in a

country by reason of persecution or other circumstances, such as happened to Christianity anciently in Persia and North Africa, while expanding in other places and being strong in itself. But England does not look forward to any better prospect. Archbishop Ramsay said some years ago that he foresaw the Church of England dividing into two, one half being absorbed into general Protestantism, the other – as he put it – disappearing, by which he meant, I think, amalgamating with Catholicism.

Re-join the Mainstream

My own suggestion which concludes this paper is an echo of that of Henrietta White. Why not abandon the reserve which has kept you away from us, and indulge in a wider extension of the religious exchange of tonight? You have to live with us. Why not try to understand us? We are trying to get in touch with you. You think that we Catholics dislike you. That is not the case. We regard you with affection. We would not wish to hurt you in any way. Part of our motive is the desire to interest you in Catholicism. Is that an offence against you? And after all we represent better than you do the mainstream of the Christian Church. You represent an Anglo-Saxon division of the 16th Century which has had little to do with the mainstream since then. We fear you will dry up in the desert unless you do not flow back.

A Great

'I hope for a great Leg
of Jesus and Mary to
the devil, and corrupt
those more than ever
are to come.'

St Louis Mar

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ig he does. Look at the eye, or
through these new electronic

microscopes and see the sheer wonder of it. If that applies to the insect which is destined to live for a day or two and whose purpose is obscure to us, why deny the same sort of preparation and perfection to the Legion of Mary which has already figured as a major item in the Church?

To see God in his works is an act of adoration. Also it is one of his most incomprehensible aspects that he takes pleasure out of our admiration of what he does. But in this case there is more at stake than that. There is the question of trying to ascertain what God had in mind as the Legion of Mary. Was his design fully implemented by his human instruments? Because their co-operation was a real thing; it was not automaton-ism. Man has a responsible part; he can make or he can mar.

Did God Have His Way Completely with the Legion?

I would like to think that God had his whole way with the Legion; that it came into the world as he intended it to. I base this on the fact that the persons interfered so little with what was placed before them. They could hardly be said to have added in anything. The one new ingredient was the full understanding of Mary. It could not be said that this was forced in; it entered so unobtrusively that it was the subject of no comment at all.

If that was how things really happened, can we not reasonably allege that God had his whole way with the legionary scheme? And can we claim any more for the Legion than that!

Furthermore can we, from our present evaluation of more than half a century of experience, say that the original Legion design has been adhered to faithfully? Archbishop Downey of Liverpool once said that every

Catholic organisation should be suppressed on its fiftieth birthday; that by then it had grown old like a person and was past its best. It would be melancholy to regard that as representing a general fact. It has not so worked out in the case of the Legion which looks as if it has only reached adult status and is only now really beginning its working life. But it would be terrible if the archbishop's words were justified to the extent that the Legion is ageing and weakening. Things that are supernatural should not wear out like that. The sacraments have not deteriorated in twenty centuries. If the Legion were truly a work of God, why should its span of life be only half a century?

But definitely the human agencies can introduce a defect. Or a small divergence somewhere along the line can prolong itself and end up almost as an opposite as time goes on.

Going Back to Our Roots – 1917

Therefore the work which this conference has set itself to is to examine most closely the Legion as it was born and then try to see if it has developed truly or if there has been deviation.

The roots of the present lie deep in the past. Assuredly the preparations for the Legion go back afar, too far for glimpsing. But its pattern became very distinct in 1917. Incidentally that year contained Fatima and the Russian Revolution which had important consequences on religion. It was in that year that Myra House came into the possession of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and this in turn led to the spacious premises being generously made available to various activities directed towards women and children. By 1818 these had produced a governing

body. This must be described in detail because in regard to the Legion it is almost the case of the child in the womb.

The 'Council' – 1918

The governing body which I will call the council met monthly at 4pm on Sunday. The various workers attended. The Spiritual Director was Fr Michael Toher and it had the four other officers. Procedure was modelled generally on that of a Vincent de Paul Conference with some modifications. One of these was in regard to the opening prayers. The St Vincent de Paul Society began its meetings with the invocation and prayer of the Holy Spirit followed by a Hail Mary and the following ejaculations: Sacred Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Heart of Mary, St Joseph, St Vincent de Paul and St Patrick – the latter being the conference under which these new activities germinated.

In those prayers the council made one vital alteration. It substituted the Ave with the Rosary. This was remarkable because nowhere was the Rosary incorporated in any committee or work meeting. On the other hand this did not prove the existence of the present Legion outlook. I will develop this point later.

After the prayers there was a spiritual reading. Then the minutes of the previous meeting were read. Then a report was taken from each member.

The works were various: individual cases, the teaching of Catechism in the Church after 12 o'clock Mass on Sundays; recruiting for the Pioneers and the League of Daily Mass; the interesting of families in the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart; the running of children's groups of different kinds. Finally, this has a special place in the economy: four brothers were incorporated who under the title of the

St Camillus Guild were visiting the patients in the Dublin Union Hospital.

At some point in the meeting an allocution was given by Fr Toher. He was an extremely spiritual man with a pronounced Marian turn.

Again suggestive of the Legion to come, the meeting had an automatic closure. When the Angelus rang out in the Church of St Nicholas of Myra almost opposite, the members rose to their feet, recited the prayer and the meeting terminated. Then the ladies adjourned to the kitchen and made tea for the company.

That meeting was a happy, stimulating affair. It foreshadowed the Legion meeting. Its methods of proceeding might have continued. It was good so that it might have been expected to expand. But it did not. It gained members but in the course of nearly four years there was no need to divide. Probably this was fortunate because it might have interfered with the path which led to the future Legion.

Catholic and Devotional but Not the Legion

I have said that the meeting was not Marian in the legionary sense. It had the Rosary but that was universal in the country then. It was devoutly Catholic and it had taken the big step forward into apostolicity. It utilised the Miraculous Medal and interested itself in the enrolment of people in the Brown Scapular. Its outlook was spiritual but emphatically it was not the Legion and this fact must be recognised in these present discussions.

De Montfort Enters in – 1919

Somewhere in 1919 some of us had encountered the St Louis Marie de Montfort's book on *True Devotion to Mary*. It

depicted Our Lady in a devastatingly different dimension to what we were accustomed to. The Catechism had never shown us anything even remotely like that. De Montfort exhibited her sharply as the mother of the Christian life, absolutely indispensable, concerned in every grace. The vastness of the role which he attributed to her and the very vehemence of the way in which he described it, gave the initial impression of gross exaggeration. Nevertheless he gripped the mind and forced one to read and enquire. At some stage in this process the conviction was gained that the book was justified and that the common presentation of Our Lady was not.

The seriousness of this was like an electric shock. For virtually it meant that we were leaving Mary out. Then we began to talk about it around us. As we did not rightly understand it ourselves, explanation was not easy but people somehow became interested.

One Sunday at the council meeting someone brought up the subject. He said that many were interested but did not understand it. Would it be possible to hold a special meeting which would be exclusively given up to that topic? The meeting accepted this suggestion and appointed a Sunday mid-way between that one and the next normal meeting.

That meeting took place. The prayers and spiritual reading were included but no other item of the customary agenda. I had been deputed to open the proceedings with a talk. I have often wondered what it was like. It was followed by what we would today call a Patrician discussion which was lively. This was terminated in the usual way by the Angelus at 6pm.

It seemed to be just an interesting session. There was no enthusiastic advocacy. No one got worked up in the

slightest. No one declared themselves as won over. It was a matter-of-fact explanation and discussion of the True Devotion. There was no decision come to and no resolution passed. The whole thing had the complexion of unfinished business, to be continued in our next – as it were. This note would tend to attach in any case by reason of the sudden shutting down of the meeting by the Angelus. And yet there was no intention on the part of those present to hold a continuation meeting. They regarded themselves as having transacted the business which had brought them together, and so they really had.

They had spent a couple of hours contemplating the real Mary and in giving an assent to what they saw. Though they did not realise it, this had changed their spiritual conceptions. As their future was to show, this attitude had apparently qualified them for a greater adventure. They had pulled a switch which set the wheels of destiny spinning.

The Spark That Caught

A fortnight later the next ordinary meeting of the council took place. The minutes contained no reference to that True Devotion meeting, nor did the latter come in for any present mention, but something else of novelty and importance did take place.

Matt Murray, who had that very morning been engaged on the visitation of the Union Hospital, was called on to give his report. It was an overwhelmingly impressive account, producing on everyone the same moving effect. That report was destined to spark off the Legion of Mary.

Immediately after the meeting when the preparations for tea were starting, two of the ladies came to Fr Toher and me and spoke of Matt Murray's remarkable report,

then going on to ask if it would be possible to organise the ladies to do the same work. The answer was given that it would be possible if a number could be obtained. They went away and soon returned with half a dozen who were willing. It was agreed that a first meeting would be held on the following Wednesday night at 8pm in a room at the end of the hall.

First Meeting – 1921

That evening was the Vigil of the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity; a circumstance not adverted to at the time. At 8pm fifteen persons assembled, thirteen women nearly all young, Fr Toher and myself. What in the circumstances we could justifiably call a portent met our eyes. For on the table stood the Legion altar as we have it today, but of course without the Vexillum. This was due to the initiative of one of the early comers, Alice Keogh, who later was the first vocation of the group.

It is notable that this particular statue had not previously played any part in the affairs of Myra House. It had been transferred to the house in 1916 as part of the property of a work which fell through, but which the Legion of Mary would absorb later on. In the meantime the statue was lying unused waiting for the day when it would be put to such dramatic use.

That altar produced a transforming effect on the bare room. It supplied the precisely appropriate setting for the meeting. It made Mary the principle visible idea. The new members did not come together and then invite her in. She was there before they assembled and they only added themselves to her. They were not merely going to form a society but to love and serve a person. There is a superior force in this idea.

I do not repeat the details of that meeting; they must be well known to you. I confine myself to the peculiarities which bear on our present subject. In a way those members did nothing new. They were only applying their old methods to a new work. They said their usual prayers. And yet everything was different; it was like as if a new personality had entered into the group and made itself felt in distinct ways. The strangest thing was the confidence with which they set themselves to plan, as if they were sure of the future. Just now they would attend to the hospital situation which had brought them together. Later on they would take in hand other works. Now they would not seek the membership of men because of certain difficulties, but they were not going to be a woman's society. Later on men would be brought in. They were not going to give material relief – either now or later. And so on with that singular assurance which characterised them and yet which could not have proceeded from themselves.

True Devotion Connection

Perhaps the most peculiar feature of all was that they were not projecting the atmosphere of the monthly meeting out of which they had just issued. They seemed to be throwing back to the True Devotion of seventeen days before. And yet they did not refer specifically to that meeting. It was taken for granted. It was almost as if what had been discussed at it had been formally enshrined in resolutions (which I have already explained was not the case) and were now formally declared to be the spiritual foundation of the Legion of Mary – not the case either. There was no discussion on this latter subject. It was as if everyone was so completely convinced by the True Devotion meeting that there was no need for

any more to be added on the subject. The principles of their relation to Mary were simply outlined. They were entering into a union with her on which everything depended. She was their mother. They would not only be subject to her care but would also try to help her with her other children.

There was no question of declaring Our Lady to be the patron of the new association. Her relation to them went far beyond that idea. At a stroke the spirituality of the monthly meeting was superseded and surpassed. The new association became the main thing and instantly began to grow. It produced four branches in its first year whereas the council had not produced one in four years. Little by little it took on the purposes of the parent group which then shrank into being the Pioneer Council, previously but one of its functions.

It has been said that the Legion was born fully grown. That is not completely accurate. For instance it did not possess its name at the outset. The Vexillum and Tessera, the Promise, its Patrons, the Catena, the Legion Prayer were hidden in the future. Its own primary doctrines such as the Mystical Body and the Holy Spirit were imperfectly grasped in the earlier stages but they were there – just as the baby has organs which it does not as yet comprehend. But that baby image is completely effective in one respect. The baby concentrates on its mother and the infant group did likewise in regard to its mother.

Love of Mary Enjoins a Pastoral Apostolate

Unquestionably the infant Legion knew its mother in a way far higher than the general community. Then it set to work to make that knowledge practical. It understood a pastoral apostolate at a time when such was not even

thought of by the laity. The motive was the helping of Mary to give Jesus.

No doubt it has picked up much additional knowledge since then, but the vital point which arises is whether this has been universal in the Legion. If only a minority possessed that full knowledge, it could not be claimed that the Legion has advanced. It would mean that the Legion on its first night knew more than the worldwide Legion today. That would mark a terrible failure at a time when the world has reached its lowest depths and needs the Legion most.

However, it seems impossible that this defect should exist. At every Legion meeting of any kind the system is explained by every means, through the handbook, the *allocutio*, the spiritual reading and the reports. It would seem to be impossible that this would not teach the true Legion to every member. But then when one surveys many of the praesidia, one is made uneasy. How could poor practice issue from good theory? So I repeat with not a little anguish: 'Could it be possible that the Legion as it came into existence on its first night was better than it is today?'

Today the Legion is famous and infinitely bigger but gain in those respects at the expense of spirit would be no gain. You will recall Newman's phrase that a material extension without a corresponding moral manifestation is almost too awful to contemplate.

Coincidence or Design?

I go back to that monthly council meeting. It existed for nearly four years before bringing forth the Legion. It was very successful and its tone was good. Yet its purpose would seem to have been to produce the Legion. It did

not grow during that time. It faded away afterwards. It possessed the same type of members, many of them actually the same individuals. It engaged in the same type of work. In those years nothing interrupted its ordinary routine until the holding of that special True Devotion meeting, and then in the twinkling of an eye something happened which led on to a new order. Within seventeen days the Legion of Mary was in operation.

It is impossible to believe that the connection between the True Devotion meeting and the immediate emergence of the Legion from the next monthly meeting was a coincidence. There was too much higher design and too little human contriving. Nearly four years had gone by without incident until the next monthly meeting was held. The moment it established in minds the true stature of Our Lady in the Christian system, things were ready for the Legion. The question of 'when' appeared to solve itself along lines of the convenience of the future members. But here again we are caused to discover the operation of a higher idea. The Legion came into existence at first Vespers of the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity, a fact not adverted to until sometime afterwards.

As you know, the Legion was for some years known by the name of its first branch, Our Lady of Mercy. I would say that the adoption of the name Legion of Mary had stimulating effects second only to those of the True Devotion meeting. The organisation started putting on its plumage. The name brought in its train our Latin terminology and the Vexillum.

Mary and the Holy Spirit

The Vexillum must be regarded thoughtfully, less because it is a beautiful emblem than for its spiritual significance.

The amazing circumstance is that it was history and not theology which designed the Vexillum. It was the name Legion which pointed to the Roman Vexillum as the Legion trademark. But of course it had to be made Catholic. By simple adaptation the eagle became the Dove. The emperor became the Queen of Heaven, and so on. The final evolution places before us the legionary conception of itself: the Holy Spirit gives himself to the world through Mary.

The Tessera picture, setting out to render the Legion pictorially for the purposes of its prayer card, reaches the same result from a different angle. Paint and brush are better able than metal to represent the closeness of union between the Holy Spirit and Mary and their members. She is portrayed as the biblical pillar of fire, and he is the fire which fills her. Around the chain border are the great texts which define Our Lady's role: the Woman of Genesis, the Co-Redemptrix, the Mediatrix of all Graces. Thus early did the Legion begin venerating her as Mediatrix. The feast was only approved by Rome in June 1921.

When the Legion Promise came, it continued the process of expanding things which had seemed to be lesser or in shadow. Even though its first word of prayer had been devoted to the Holy Spirit the Legion babe had concentrated on its mother. But in the promise the Legion has gained maturity and sees Mary in the light of the Holy Spirit. The Legion has to be absorbed totally in Mary before it can be used fully by the Holy Spirit. Though not fully understood at the time, all this was implicit in the first meeting of the Legion of Mary and was contained in its first words of prayer when it addressed the Holy Spirit.

Mary is the wings of the Heavenly Dove on which he comes.

The Petrine Text

Something of real historic importance has taken place in our own days; that is the publication of the new English translation of the Bible. This work was carried through under the auspices of all the chief British Churches, and was finally accepted by all those Churches and by their parallel bodies throughout the world. The Catholic Church was not associated in this project but subsequently gave an approval to it subject to a comparatively small number of objections.

I gather that the scholars representing the Catholic Church, as well as the Protestant ones, are now engaged in trying to secure agreement in regard to the texts still in dispute. From the temper in which this research is being undertaken, it would seem likely that agreement will be reached, and that the dream of a uniform English Bible will be realised.

I say to Thee, Simon, Thou Art Peter

However it is not that whole Bible which I am going to discuss with you, but only a single text of it, the one

which we call the Petrine Text; that is the passage of St Matthew which defines St Peter's relation to the Church. In our Bible it reads as follows:

I say to thee, Simon, thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

That passage is a proclamation of the papacy. Its wording is almost exactly paralleled in the Protestant Bibles from the Authorised Version of King James (1611) and the Revised Version of 1881 on to the present time, when it has been radically enough amended by the translation which is being called the New English Bible, published in 1961.

Why have such extensive changes been made considering that the translators had proposed to themselves a new but strict translation of the original Greek, which would aim at introducing as few alterations as possible while at the same time removing definite ambiguities which existed in the earlier Bibles? Here, they declared, the step would be taken of altering the original so as to make the intended meaning completely clear.

In the Petrine Text this latter step has been taken. The phrase: 'Thou art Peter' has been amplified by adding to it the words 'the rock' meaning thereby that the original form had been causing confusion. Why should this be, for to the minds of Catholics there had been no ambiguity?

The reaction of every Catholic would be: 'What is wrong with the Petrine Text as it has always been rendered? We find no obscurity in it. We have always seen it as that new Bible now has it.' If there had been ambiguity in the text, the Church would have put a footnote to clarify it. I repeat: no Catholic ever saw the difficulty that the new Bible has so commendably removed.

A Common Protestant Rendering

But there was a disastrous confusion at work among Protestants. They were put into that difficulty by those who taught them and the purpose was the denying of the papacy. The method adopted was to explain the text somewhat in the following manner:

Our Lord is addressing Simon: 'Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona. I say to thee: thou art Peter.' But then immediately Our Lord directed attention to himself, perhaps by placing his hand on his breast or pointing to himself as he spoke the ensuing words: 'And upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' Then at this point our Lord swings back to Simon Peter and directs the remainder of the text to him as follows: 'And I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever thou shalt bind upon Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.'

Now I ask what justification is there for such a strained, in fact tortured, interpretation as that? The text is obviously directed towards Peter from beginning to end. There is no indication or reason for alleging that Our Lord suddenly applied one phrase of it to himself.

Neither let us forget that Our Lord had begun by designating Simon as the Rock, so that it would be

confusing in the extreme for him to introduce himself as another or opposition Rock. In Aramaic, the dialect of Hebrew in which Our Lord was speaking, the phrase was: 'Simon, thou art 'Kepha' and upon this Kepha I will build my Church.' There is no possibility of a confusion. Likewise in Greek and Latin, and in the languages which grew out of them, Peter and Rock remain the same word. To that effect, from his Catechism days, every Catholic has been instructed. So as a result no difficulty is apparent to him.

Exploitation of an Ambiguity

In English-speaking Protestantism, however, the possibility of ambiguity did exist. At some stage or another in the development of that language the word Peter lost its primary meaning as 'Rock' and became the Christian name alone. Accordingly without proper explanation the phrase 'Thou art Peter' became confusing and in fact unintelligible. As I have said, this explanation was routinely given to English-speaking Catholics. Peter meant Rock. That made sense. Simon was made the Rock on which Our Lord then goes on to say he will build his Church against which the gates of Hell will not prevail.

But somewhere along the line after the Reformation some bright minds had the brainwave of exploiting the ambiguity which lay in the fact that the English Bible used the word Peter instead of Rock and that the Protestant people did not know that Peter meant Rock. So those false teachers utilised this to eliminate the papacy by explaining that when Jesus said he would build the Church upon the rock, he meant he would build it upon himself. This was calculated to deceive those who did not know that Peter and Rock were the one word, and that Simon had just been declared to be the Rock.

This is certainly an alarming way of handling Scripture. Surely it is to the like of them that the Epistle of St Peter is pointing when it speaks of those who distort the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pt 3:16).

Then, having thus deprived Simon Peter of the headship of the Church, those distorters of the text inconsistently go on to grant him the attributes of headship, that is the possession of its keys and the power of binding and loosing. How can these privileges be separated from the function of headship?

When for the first time many years ago, that method of repudiating the papacy was practised on me by a Protestant controversialist, I thought it to be an idiosyncrasy of his own. But I was soon to learn that it was their standard method of expounding the text. Apparently that was what was taught to children in their classes.

Silence of the Scholars

And now one has to ask: What attitude were the Protestant scholars adopting in that reprehensible situation: Because they were not under any illusions. Just as much as the Catholic scholars, they were aware of the linguistic niceties involved in that text. They knew that Our Lord, having declared Simon to the Rock, did not in the next breath abstract that word from him and transfer it to himself, because that would only make nonsense.

Perhaps they were relying on a sentence from St Augustine (tract 124, 5) which says that Christ is the rock on which the Church is built. And of course he is. He is 'head of the corner'. But his words to Simon on this occasion constitute him the visible Rock that will represent the Lord and wield his authority when he himself returns to the Father. And St Augustine goes

on to say 'Peter is the rock built upon the Rock that is Christ'.

Knowing those things full well, what did they do? Did they try to get the true meaning over to those who were being led astray? Personally, I never saw any sign that they were endeavouring to correct that wrong interpretation. The better books may not have taught it but neither did they seek to correct it. The scholars resorted to a discreditable silence because the false explanation suited them by hitting at the papacy.

Of course those were days when passions ran high and the light of reason was obstructed by the clouds of prejudice. But in what may be described as our own time, the scholars of the various religions began to come together to discuss their differences. Then that astounding misuse of the Petrine Text could come in for attention, and the Catholics would make themselves heard on the subject.

The production of the Protestant revised Bible in 1881 brought to a head the question of the general accuracy of its contents. Its merits as a faithful translation came in for fierce attack. One such criticism by a learned Protestant writer, Abbott, set out the very many errors which existed in that revised edition. He declares that in almost every page of it are to be found deviations from strict accuracy, and that without such accuracy the closest reasoning may be involved in deep perplexity.

Another eminent Protestant expert, Archdeacon Hare, develops as follows: 'No error should be deemed slight which affects the meaning of single word in the Bible where so much weight is attached to every single word and where so many inferences and conclusions are drawn from the slightest grounds. Hence it is the main duty of

the Church to take care that the version of the scriptures which it puts into the hands of its members shall be as faultless as possible. It should be revised from time to time in order to secure the utmost accuracy in every word.'

Fallibility of Translations

But counter-arguments were not lacking to the effect that to make changes would cast doubt on the validity of the whole scriptures, as if every work in the English Authorised or Revised Versions must be regarded as infallible. Actually that very idea was encouraged in many quarters because of the absence of any other infallibility in the Protestant Churches, certainly had to be found somewhere. It had been agreed to find it in the Bible and therefore differences of words assumed an importance which they would not have in the Catholic Church where there is a recognised authority to determine disputes. No matter how many languages the Bible may be in, the living voice is at hand to explain. But obviously where the Bible is set up as its own unregulated authority, variations in wording can take on importance and can even produce divisions and heresies.

The saying that there are as many opinions as there are men became more and more justified as authority became increasingly indefinite in Protestantism. Hindrances to the productions of new editions of the scriptures disappeared so that any publisher could bring out a new and revolutionary version. Any sort of absurdity could perpetrate itself, for example the impudence of the marked Bibles which underline what the respective editors regard as the texts most important to salvation. Who gave them the authority to make such a picking of texts? Needless to say they are not found marking the

Petrine Text; nor the episode of Cana where Our Lord worked the first miracle at the behest of his mother; nor the promise at Capernaum of the Eucharist; nor the institution of the Eucharist.

Who Can Vouch for the Scriptures?

Moreover the authenticity of the scriptures and their standing as the inspired Word of God began to be widely and, one could almost say, universally questioned. Of course such attitudes must necessarily prevail once the status of the Catholic Church is denied, for it is the body on which the entire position of the scriptures depends. Without it we would not have any Bible, for it was the Church which defined what was scripture and what was not scripture. St Augustine in the Fourth Century insisted on this principle: 'I would not,' he said, 'believe the Gospel itself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.'

From the highly unexpected quarter of Luther comes the testimony: 'We are obliged to yield many things to the Papists; that with them is the Word of God which we received from them. Otherwise we should have known nothing whatever about it' (*Commentary on John VI*, 16).

From what Our Lord declared in the Petrine Text, which we have been discussing, derives the standing of the scriptures as inspired. To the Church alone belongs the authority to define everything about it and to judge whether a particular wording expresses the divine intention. Experts of all brands may debate eruditely on items and aspects, but finality rests with the See of Peter. The Catholic Church is not the child of the Bible but its mother.

Interpretation Theory That Did Not Work

Today the dykes have opened to let in a deluge of doubt. The Protestant claim that the Holy Spirit inspires the reader of the Bible with the true sense has not stood up to the heat and burden of time. Because it is not the way to the truth which God has ordained. That way is the Church to which the Bible itself points as the pillar and the ground or mainstay of the truth (1 Tm 3:15).

Once the teaching of the Church is repudiated, there is nothing which cannot happen. As St Paul forcefully puts it: 'Mankind is tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine devised in the wickedness of men and in craftiness according to the wishes of men' (Eph 4:14).

Without the Church no correcting of the texts of scripture or the bringing out of new revisions of the Bible is going to remedy those chaotic conditions but rather to intensify them. Today world-Protestantism presents the appearance of an ultimate fissuring where everyone is a law unto himself and agreement with another is only accidental.

A New Bible for All

Possibly it was due to a realisation of that desperate position, that in 1947 a Joint Committee of the Protestant Churches of Great Britain and Ireland was setup to make a completely new translation of the Bible. That Committee was un-denominational and included representatives of:

- The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland,
- The Church of England,
- The Church of Scotland,
- The Congregational Union of England and Wales,
- The Council of Churches for Wales,

- The Society of Friends (Quakers),
- The Methodist Church of Great Britain,
- The Presbyterian Church of England,
- The united Council of Christian Churches and Religious Communions in Ireland,
- The British and Foreign Bible Society,
- The National Bible Society of Scotland.

That degree of concord on the part of the Protestant Churches is impressive. The weight of scholarship and of patient labour which it brought to bear on its task could hardly be exceeded. The first part of its project was concluded in 1961 by the publication of the New Testament.

I understand that this work has been acclaimed and accepted by nearly all of the non-Catholic world, and that the Catholic Church has caused to be issued a New Testament which includes every item of that other work with the exception of about fifty words or phrases. These it sets forth as an Appendix giving the reason in each case for non-acceptance. I understand further that the Catholic experts are now in consultation with the others in the aim of reaching a total agreement.

Would be a Giant Step towards Reunion

When contemplating the possibility of attaining this end, the objection which will present itself to the Catholic mind is that some of the still disputed items may involve vital points of doctrine on which agreement cannot be reached. But when one takes into account the extreme sincerity shown by those Protestant workers in trying to set out the real sense of words, even where this tells against the traditional or accepted Protestant meaning, it becomes

possible to hope that agreement will be forthcoming in those surviving instances.

Fifty items of difference represents a very small proportion of the entire New Testament. Yet that is all that now stands in the way of an agreed New Testament, which would surely be a priceless possession, a giant step towards the unification of Christianity. For the uniformity of the text would denote the still greater element of desire for corporate union.

Effort to Make Amends

Another notable exemplification of the generosity of that Protestant effort is contained in Jn 2-4 and in Jn 19-27, which concern Our Lord's address to his mother at Cana and on Calvary. In each of these texts the word 'Woman' is substituted for 'Mother' for the purpose (as explained in the Introduction to the volume) of 'making the meaning as clear as it could be made'. What is the problem of ambiguity which has to be solved here? It is that the word 'Woman', hitherto used in all editions of the New Testament, has been subjected to a violation of its true meaning. Rank and file Protestantism has imparted to the word 'Woman' a derogatory sense, as if Our Lord was spurning his mother. In other words at Cana she is being offensively told to mind her own business; and on Calvary Our Lord is exhibited in his last moments as addressing his mother contemptuously.

The alteration in each case to 'Mother' made by the new Bible decisively disposes of that more than improper misinterpretation. But while appreciating the intention which produced the new version, it has to be pointed out that it is effective at the price of interfering with a vital purpose of Our Lord on those supreme occasions,

that is, to identify his mother with the Woman of Genesis (3:15). However, I am only mentioning this as an aside and I repeat that the Protestant intention is honourable and commendable.

Now let us return to the main tide of our consideration, that is the Petrine Text. I suggest that it would be difficult, even impossible, to make a scriptural alteration which could have more far-reaching consequences than the one which we are discussing. It makes plain to those outside the Catholic Church what had been obscured for them before. It takes the remarkable liberty with the scriptures of adding words to a classical text in order to remove all possible doubt. And this is in respect of that ultra-special text, which more than any other, marks the dividing line between the Protestant and Catholic Churches. The addition of that word 'Rock' changes what had been a battlefield into a broad road towards reunion.

Noblest and Most Dramatic Gesture of All

It is not easy to see how anyone outside the Church can for the future read that new blunt Petrine Text without realising its dynamic content. I quote the new form:

You are Peter the Rock; and on this Rock
I will build my Church, and the forces
of death shall never overpower it. I will
give you the keys of the Kingdom of
Heaven; what you forbid on Earth shall be
forbidden in Heaven, and what you allow
on Earth shall be allowed in Heaven (Mt
16:18-19).

The more one reads this new version, the more one is moved by the nobility of making such an amendment which is an admission that grievous wrong had been tolerated in the past. Multitudes have been left in ignorance of the elementary fact that Our Lord had used the one word for Peter and Rock, and that all the original languages of the Bible did the same; and that the comparatively modern language of English is one of those which has separated the meanings of the two words. Moreover this lack of knowledge had been so manipulated as to turn the whole text upside down; it was made to mean that the Church was *not* built upon Simon Peter.

I refer again to the reprehensible silence of their leaders who knew. But only for the purpose of giving honour where honour is due, that is to all those who took part in the meritorious work of producing the New English Bible.

Petrine Text Now Clear

This New Bible transforms the situation in many ways. Does this mean that the signals are now set for the reunion of Christendom? Far from that, one has to say with infinite regret. The prejudices of ages cannot be thus easily erased. But at least it will be possible to prove to Protestants that their old anti-Petrine interpretation is now inadmissible. It would be irrational for them to say that they will not receive the new and that they adhere to the old. Thereby they would set themselves against the accumulated up-to-date scholarship of all the Protestant Churches.

But of course there would be nothing inconsistent in their doing that, because Protestantism is essentially an individualism. The individuals have been told to read the Bible and that the Holy Spirit will administer the correct meaning to them. A person educated to that idea will not

yield his own opinion to the united declaration of all the Churches on earth. He believes that the Holy Spirit has picked him out and given that truth to him alone.

With such as he, nobody can deal. But there are others who have been going by the incorrect interpretation hitherto given to them and who will be ready to accept the new rendering which leaves no doubt as to the identity of the Rock on which Christ has built his Church.

An Escape Route Found: a Personal Gift to Peter Only

I have heard one method of escaping from the new text. It was that Our Lord was indeed basing his Church upon Peter, but that this was only a personal grant. It was to Peter alone and not continued to his successors! This explanation would certainly represent the finding of a loophole where the authors of the New Bible had meant to leave none. The idea that Peter was to be the foundation for the term of his own life and no more would be so bereft of purpose as to be senseless. The special need for such a head would arise later when the apostles would all have passed away, and would increase as the origin became the more remote.

Furthermore, would that withdrawal of headship mean that the other attributes of the Church would also disappear at the death of Peter, that is its prevalence against the gates of Hell, its power to loose and to bind? Would not, also, the other teaching functions conferred on Peter by Our Lord, that is the feeding of the lambs and sheep (Jn 21:15- 17), terminate with Peter? Thus deprived of pastoral function, what would be left for the Church to do? Could such an attenuated Church claim to have a tangible existence?

The conclusive answer to the foregoing nonsensical supposition lies in the commission given to the Church in the final words of Our Lord, spoken on Mount Oliver: 'All power in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world' (Mt 26:18-20).

Therefore the Church is for all time, and subject to the same conditions as those under which it was established, and is identical in every way with what was established.

The Holy

Within reason it is desirable to be informed in regard to everything that is their mission to pass on to the next generation. I am referring not only to the primary but also to the secondary side of the coin, the devotions and special historical and tactical value that they are capable of. They can be more eagerly listened to when they are based on material. Likewise they form

The set phrase at the present time is that religion is disproved. And that is the process. Every day science is advancing while we are led to suppose that religion is bound to disappear. The harm is evident. People put religion on a par with thought, whereas its real power has only to be presented to the

Science at a Lower Level

Granted that science is a vast field, it is no more than an expression of the

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Reveals God

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belongs to nature and nature belongs to God. To certain higher aspects of nature God imparts much of himself, including the power to think and to will. He acts thus with special force in the case of his masterpiece, the Blessed Virgin, and mankind in general. Science is on an abysmally lower level, the mechanical. But as it gives and displays God, it therefore must manifestly be wondrous in itself. However, to suggest that science or pure nature at their supremest could ever tell against divine truth or rival God himself would be a contradiction and an absurdity.

But the divine things have to be presented before they will be considered by mankind. If they are not presented, the mind will rest completely under the spell of the wonders of nature, so that man will be found committing what is veritably an idolatry; that is worshipping the tangible in the place of its Creator.

The folly is being committed of supposing that science never testifies to religion and is no help to faith. Such is far from being the case. Nature is not against God; neither is it merely neutral. If our supernatural sense is delicate, we can see the Catholic Church in its true glory, as a superb adventure, necessarily offering all that nature offers and then going on to the infinitely greater things of the higher order.

Nature is as much, and probably more at work in the world of religion than it is in the purely material world. Because religion has to be no less beautifully decked out to the intelligent mind than is pure nature. Moreover it cannot be allowed to seem to the human mind that faith is only a cold, abstract quality. The mind is too much a thing of impulses and emotions to leave it unprotected like that.

All the time God is, so to speak, balancing things in order to compensate for the apparently heavier impact of the natural than of faith. And all the time he is gently assisting faith. Learned men have laughed the Church off the stage and declared it to be dead. But suddenly – for instance – Lourdes stands up and leaves the learned ones without a word to say. Or one of the more significant discoveries is made, such as photography or nuclear science. At once the materialistic brigade proclaims that these will show up all the relics and religious fictions which have kept religion alive. So men with the up-to-date scientific equipment descend on those items and subject them to the new devastating tests. But then there is invariably a silence, because the alleged fake has withstood the investigations. Or sometimes indeed it is not such a silence which follows the researching, but an excited tumult. For the object under test has been proved not merely genuine but of a character far exceeding what it had seemed to possess previously.

The Electronic Microscope

A while ago I ventured to discuss the celebrated picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, something I had not known much about until then. For long it had been in the classification which I have been describing, that it was strongly believed in and as violently controverted. Thus things stood till the age of scientific discovery when tests began to be applied to it. Disconcertingly, the picture triumphantly stood up to each succeeding one of those tests until finally the new electronic microscope was turned on to it. This demonstrated conclusively that it was no painting as had been contended by the doubters but was photographic in its character, a true representation

of Our Blessed Lady and in her eyes perfectly reflected were those other persons present in the bishop's room on that famous feast of the Immaculate Conception. Recall too that the conversion of all Mexico was accomplished within seven years of that event.

All over the world are priceless relics of one kind and another, garnished with every sort of scientific and other evidence of an unquestionable character, and yet only receiving a half-attention. I have in mind such wonders as the True Cross, the Blood of St Januarius, the Sacred Thorn of Andrea, and countless others, about which one has only to talk to awaken interest.

But it is in regard to a different item of the Church's inheritance that I am going to deal. I am going to tell the tale of the Holy Shroud. Nothing more amazing could be narrated. Knowing the facts, you have a thrilling meditation for yourself and a shattering weapon to use against the forces of unbelief.

Gospels Tell of the Shroud

I will begin by quoting literally from all the four Gospels to supply the foundation:

St Matthew: 'Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered the body to be given up. And Joseph, taking the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock' (Mt 27:58-60).

St Mark: 'And Joseph bought a linen cloth, and took him down and swathed him in the linen cloth and laid him in the tomb.... and when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome

brought sweet spices that they might go and anoint him' (Mk 25:46).

St Luke: 'Joseph took him down and wrapped him in a linen sheet and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb where no man had yet lain. But the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed after and beheld the tomb and how his body was laid. And they went back and prepared spices and ointments' (Lk 23:53-56).

St John: 'Joseph took away the body of Jesus. And there also came Nicodemus (who at first had come to Jesus by night) bringing a mixture of Myrrh and aloes ... they therefore took the body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices after the Jewish manner of preparing for burial' (Jn 19:39-40).

Here I interpose the comment that this does not refer to the full ritual of burial, which due to the approach of the Sabbath, had to be deferred until Sunday. Now to continue:

'And the other disciple, (John) outran Peter and came first to the tomb and stooping down to look in, he seeth the linen cloth lying there, yet he went not in. Simon Peter, therefore, cometh also, following and went in to the tomb. And he beholdeth the linen cloth lying there, while the napkin which had been upon his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up apart in a place by itself' (Jn 20:4-7).

There you have the first reference to the Holy Shroud. You will note that in all of the four gospels it is stressed in a particular way as if there were to be an after-history.

There are many of the principle events of gospel history which are attested to by only a single gospel. There is a whole section of persons whose special practice is to study intently every word of scripture and assert that it has an inspired meaning. What do they make of this gospel insistence on the linen cloth?

Its Subsequent Wanderings

We know nothing in regard to how and by whom the Shroud was preserved after the Resurrection Day. It is certain that loving hands took charge of it, but gaps and uncertainties mark its history. At some stage its course paralleled that of the True Cross itself. It came into the possession of the Roman Empire. The thought presents itself that St Helena, the mother of Constantine, had an analogous part in the taking possession of the Shroud to that which she filled in the finding of the True Cross and other transcendent relics. Therefore the Shroud was kept in the Chapel of Our Lady of Blachernes at Constantinople, definitely as far as the year 1269.

It disappeared when the city was taken by the crusaders and different versions exist as to the manner in which it found its way to France about 1353. But from time to time there is certainty about its location. At the instance of St Charles Borromeo it was transferred by the Duke of Savoy to Turin in 1578 where it has ever since been enshrined in the Royal Chapel adjoining the high altar in the cathedral there. It has always been known and venerated whether it was considered to be the miraculous object which it is or only as a superlative work of artistic piety.

In regard to the latter possibility, it was assumed that it was in the power of a great artist to produce such a triumph. However, I quote something which demonstrated the

contrary. During the researching of 1897 two celebrated Italian artists, Reffo and Cassetti, were commissioned to paint replicas of the Shroud, an easier task it will be realised than to make the original. The result of their work appeared to be perfection. It was not possible to distinguish between the original and the replicas, no Shroud expert could detect any differences. But then photography was turned onto the imitations. The results were startling in their deficiencies, nearly every detail coming out crude and distorted. This has been judged to prove that to paint a negative from the Shroud would be beyond the power of even the most skilled artist.

The dimensions of the Shroud are three feet seven inches by fourteen feet three inches. It was originally bigger but relics were cut off each end in earlier times when people were more casual about such treasures. It shows two impressions, one of the front and one of the back of a human body. It is smudged, dirty, and the outlines indistinct. In parts it is stained and burnt as the result of being caught in a fire while it was in France.

As I have stated, up to the beginning of this century there was a clash of opinion in regard to its authenticity, and possibly the majority doubted its miraculous quality, believing that it was no more than an extremely expert piece of painting. Rather would it merit being regarded as a work of genius. Remember that it gave the effect of linen dating from the beginning of the Christian era. This progressively brought with it the doubt that the Shroud could last so long. This plausible objection has been completely refuted by the fact that fabrics, including linens, made in Egypt 3,000 years ago, are as good today as ever. Moreover the Shroud gave the impression of having only been briefly in contact with a body done to death

after ill-treatment of the most brutal and comprehensive kind, agreeing in every respect with the detailed account of Our Lords' tortures. Every impression, discoloration or damage was so brilliantly produced in reverse as to rival reality. So those who doubted its genuineness as the Shroud did not disparage it, but on the contrary revered and treasured it as a most perfect memorial of the greatest event in history.

Such was the situation up to the year 1898. In that year permission was given to exhibit the Shroud for investigation. Scientists of every kind hurried to submit it to the most up to date tools of their trades. It was tested as to the age claimed for it, and as to the source of each marking or stain.

The Advent of Photography

Above all it was subjected to photography which had been discovered in 1832. The artist given this responsibility by the king himself was Secundo Pio. As an expert he must have realised that he was going to find *something*. Assuredly the camera's searching eye was going to probe deep, to express the weaknesses, and most likely to show up the paint and brush marks of any artistic work. But can even he have sensed what he was to find?

As the chemical process advanced and the features took shape, he saw that the incredible was taking place. Before him in startling clearness was the figure of the dead Christ, and his privileged eyes were the first to see it! His mind may have needed a second or two to adjust itself and to diagnose what had taken place. It was something that today everyone in the world understands. He had reversed the usual photographic process, that is where an object is photographed yielding a negative, the latter

turning everything into its opposite and thereby into obscurity.

In a word Pio saw that the blessed Shroud by its contact with the body had mysteriously become a negative and that he himself had just reversed this; his negative was a positive. He had in his hands the portrait of the Saviour of the world fresh from his Passion and death.

Of course since then it has been photographed repeatedly with the result that it would be hard to understand the point of view that would today animate any attitude of denial. For scientific opinion is reasonably at one in its acceptance of these facts.

In particular it is to be noted that the photographic revelation in 1898 has made untenable the opinion that the Shroud was a masterpiece of painting. In 1936 Pope Pius XI declared that: 'The mysterious article was certainly not the work of any human hand.'

What we might call a quaint testimony is one which was published in 1937 by the *Scientific American*, a paper of the highest repute in its own sphere and not addicted to a support of religion. In publishing a completely favourable article by Paul Megnon on the Shroud, the journal insists that it is only concerned with the scientific aspects of this matter and that it regards Dr Megnon as having made his case.

I must repeat that in addition to photography every other conceivable test has been applied to the Shroud, including rays and chemicals not long known to us and principles of science only recently grasped. To every such approach the Shroud has remained impregnable in its evidence of genuineness. No loophole has been found, but on the other hand new qualities have been discerned. For example the acids and sweats produced from the skin of a tortured man.

Absence of Distortion

Moreover the photographic aspect may be said to be doubly miraculous in as much as the production of a film from a negative requires the even alignment of the two. In the case of the Shroud there is no such attempt to produce a precise alignment. The body was simply laid on the lower half of the cloth and the top part of the latter roughly folded back over the upper part of the body. According to the procedure of ordinary photography, such unevenness and gaps would be attended by the crudest results, whereas in the Shroud is the most perfect possible grading of continuity.

In quite a particular way, the countenance of the figure is shown in death as of great nobility and beauty of the pure Jewish type; hair and beard abundant; nose, mouth and brow of strength. Such is the effect that at the first glance the conviction is inescapable: It is the Lord!

The imprint of the face is more perfect than the rest of the body. This is strange by reason of the outstanding fact of the human face being its unevenness, to which it owes its features and accordingly its likeness. Moreover this creates its complication in the conveying of a contact image especially by photography. But of course where a miracle of such immensity is in question, difficulties do not enter in.

The intense examination of the Shroud renders up to us the entire history of the Passion. All of Our Lord's wounds can be located: the sign of the cruel scourging such as was inflicted by the Roman flagellum made of leather thongs, each one bearing two metal balls at their ends. Other marks show the wounds in the head, the shoulder lacerated by the carrying of the Cross, the wounds in hands and feet caused by the nails, and the

heart pierced by the soldiers lance after death. So unique from every point of view is this manifestation that it is impossible to see how any other miracle could move the mind more than it does. So the fullest use should be made of the Holy Shroud in our approach to those who are cold to religion. It shows the power of God pouring itself out in an overwhelming way and endorsing all that we have been taught about the sufferings of Our Lord. Studying the rich detail of the Shroud, it is impossible to avoid emotion and even to refrain from tears. The psychology of having a central gospel feature like the Shroud placed before us in all its photographic details is profound. It almost enables us to see those past events with our eyes and to read what amounts to a doctor's minute report of the satanic outrages to the Innocent One. We realise more acutely that he suffered it all for us and his place in our hearts widens to a new dimension.

A 'Must' for Every Scientist

It would be hard to conceive a more spiritual exercise than such a study of the Shroud. If it could be imposed as a *must* on every scientist in the whole world – and why not, for it offers mysterious depths of knowledge for each profession to study – the effect on them would be bewildering and thought-provoking, and a new attitude towards religion might result. It is true that not many of the doctors who take part in the investigations at Lourdes are converted to Catholicism, but certainly none of them are ever again found indulging in any foolish mockery of what happens at the shrine. We confidently assert the same in respect of any scientist who would study the Shroud seriously.

Is the mystic process which has given us the sublime image true photography? Though the final result imitates

photography, it must be taken as a matter of course that it far exceeds our photography. The latter is a clever human invention which utilised lenses and the laws of light to cast images onto a sensitised paper. But the image of the Shroud was placed on it without any mechanisms except perhaps angelic ones, and therefore hardly qualifies to be strictly styled photography. This higher nature enabled it to overcome what would have been insuperable obstacles to ordinary photography. For instance if the sensitised paper were not in proper juxtaposition with the film or negative, a worthless picture would result, whereas the Shroud was only conformed in a rough way to the contour to the Sacred Body. Nevertheless the impression produced is a flawless one, a perfect likeness.

Photography has its own laws and is pinned to them. But we do not know what the future will do in regard to the Holy Shroud. Just as successive waves of discovery in the past have found new features in the Shroud, so we must believe that the future will bring forth further ones. God's hands are not held in any way and it would seem certain to me that at some future juncture when human or diabolical malice launches some damaging assault on our faith, God will respond by delivering one of his most typical dynamic strokes.

The Future Will Reveal Further Wonders

But having made the Shroud the subject of one demonstration so colossal as to have the eyes of the entire world centred on it at the moment, could we not piously reason that he has gained from it all that he designs? I would have to think otherwise. God does not remove his gaze from what he has already done, and certainly he would never put out of his thought the garments which

Our Lord wore in the tomb for those 'three days'. He has preserved the Shroud through every sort of peril and has held it over to these times of special peril for religion to publish the stupefying and strange memorial of his son's ordeal for men.

So I would think that in the future we will see the Holy Shroud force itself upon the attention of mankind in some further miraculous way. Surely we are meant to talk about it and introduce it to the notice of every believer and half-believer.

I hark to that significant fact that all the four gospels, contrary to their ordinary practice, give so much attention to the Shroud which in relation to such a tragic moment would hardly have seemed a matter for recording at all. Unquestionably the Holy Spirit in so moving the pens of the four evangelists had in mind every stage of the mighty relic's history which is far from terminating in the sensational discovery in 1898 or in those which will follow from the present critical re-examination, that is of the year 1978.

Of course, experiment will have gained a tremendous impetus as a result of the present researches, and these will eagerly continue out of motives of very different quality. Some will hope to prevail against the supernatural side which is now the predominant one. Others will long for further tests of heavenly wonders, which indeed could be anticipated having regard to the fact that the Shroud is so intimately linked up with the Redemption.

The Truth is Victorious, but it Must Be Presented

Conversation has assumed an importance greater, if possible, than ever before by reason of an unexpected feature presenting itself. False ecumenism has exercised a destructive effect on the faith of Catholics, such that it is being said that many Catholics believe that one religion is as good as another. The result is a great falling away from practice and a total cessation of effort to convert. Fr Congar delivers a statement to missionary students to the effect that they should not be seeking to convert the mission lands. When asked if this does not deprive the missionary orders of any function, he replies: 'They have a function; it is to study.' May I ask: To study what and for what purpose? This is such a blunt denial of everything Our Lord said and of what the Catholic Church has always held that it is intolerable. This sort of thing is the opposite to the Catholic Church.

Conversion Is Out and Yet....

As a body which believes in the Catholic Church, the Legion must set itself resolutely to conversion, thus

to do the same. What is at work? Does it mean that every university in America has the same possibility in it but is not being exploited. Does it mean that no other university has three professors who believe like those do? Are there no Catholics anywhere else who believe in the potent way that we do?

Whatever the above instances point to, they show that people are willing to believe; that there is an instinctive urge in mankind to believe. Let us hug close to us St Augustine's statement that the heart of man cannot rest except in God.

The position is that we are God's children. He has placed in each one of us that inclination towards him which we can describe as embryonic faith, but which has to be enkindled by contact and baptism. Therefore the first consideration is that we make contact with every person on earth with a view to setting this process in motion. And this is precisely what Our Lord ordered. As a total proposition this sounds impossible. But reduced to parochial level it becomes a practical matter. It could be done at present over the greater part of the world. For the moment it is not possible in certain areas. But in absolutely no part of the world is that attempt being made. This represents a terrible act of disobedience to the divine command.

Faith and the Mind of Man

Now I consider the question of faith and the mind of man. That mind has a unique quality. It is able to rise inconceivably above itself. The other living orders of nature cannot do so. The vegetable order cannot understand or rise to the life of the animal. The animal cannot even

remotely conceive the life of man. But the man's mind can ascend into a higher order and be at home with God and the angels.

Someone will say; I do not see anything strange in that. Is not the mind a thinking machine which is capable of speculating about things above itself – just as man is capable bodily to get into a flying machine and rise above the material earth? This introduces some complex ideas. I can indeed imagine a natural intellect being able to speculate in regard to God and another life, but not in a serious, believing way – only as we would think over a fairy tale. Would a man possessed only of a purely natural intellect be capable of considering the question of the Divinity, the Trinity and the works of God? Probably he would. For example if he was looking at the believing section of the human race, he would have to observe that they accepted the idea of God. But I do not think *he* would be capable of accepting it. I think that this follows from that idea of each natural level being unable to appreciate a higher one.

Then how is it that apparently all men *are* at home in that supernatural stratosphere? It used to be said many years ago that every race instinctively believed in God except the Hottentots of South Africa. But later I saw this generalisation made absolute; the ban against the Hottentots was raised. If all men do in a sense believe naturally, how comes it that the purely natural intellect is thus able to rise above itself? The reason is that man is *not* purely natural. He has a soul which uses the body and which makes him half-spirit. Incidentally I suggest that here we have conclusive proof of the existence of the soul. For in man we see the operation of something which is far, far above the purely natural; which is at home as I have said in the spiritual world, believing that God exists

and that there is a life to come. I contend that without the soul the purely natural intellect could not accept those things though it could face them in thought and wonder that people could believe in them.

Baptism and Faith

The next question is that of baptism. Theological faith, or the capacity to understand and believe easily, comes by baptism. What then of those who are un-baptised? The great majority of the people of the world are un-baptised and still have that instinctive tendency towards God which proceeds from the soul. In a special way baptism takes hold of that and attaches the soul to Christ and gives it the power to lead the full Christian life.

There are a large number of cases where the baptised persons seem to be in the position of pure nature, that is of being able to reason about God but not accept him. Why in view of the argument about the soul and baptism? I would ascribe that position to the fact that the will remains dominant and is in those cases set firm against belief by circumstances which we can only guess at. How much of faith is made up of the desire to believe? Can we not create in ourselves by our conduct a mental climate in which belief would be so disadvantageous as to cause the will to reject it? Such things as a bad life to which one is attached, or a state of pride which is unshakable, could so dominate the position as to make the idea of God utterly distasteful. In which cases, faith would find it hard to enter.

The Case of H.G. Wells

In order to make this a little more definite I mention a couple of cases. One is that of H.G. Wells, the very brilliant

novelist. He seems to have absolutely no supernatural sense in him, to be incapable of believing. I saw two ingredients in him which could incline him against faith. The first was the lack of morals. The second was a simply colossal pride – to appreciate which, you would want to read his book *Homo Sapiens*. It is an exercise of arrogance that few men could achieve. He really believed that he knew the secret of knowledge to the extent that he could write a book on mankind which would out-distance and supersede the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, and any other influential document which has ever been written.

From Convert to Priest to Unbeliever

The other case is that of a great friend of my own, a convert who became a priest and a fervent one. Suddenly in the midst of war he felt he no longer believed in God. He abandoned the priesthood and has never come back to it. His life is blameless and I do not see the operations of pride in him. He is living at the other side of the world but visits me every year or so. The only thing we talk about is the Church, which he claims is the only religion if God exists. I have tried to analyse this mysterious situation and the only explanation I can think of is this. He was brought up in a very refined Methodism in which kindness and love of neighbour were paramount. In other words Christianity was placed in an extremely sentimental setting. This worked out all right until he was placed face to face with the ultimate grimness of life. He witnessed multitudes shattered to bits. He saw hate and cruelty in control. This so violated the benevolent code in which he had been brought up as to hit at the very foundations of his Christianity. He was not able to reconcile the horrors

of life with the goodness of God. And the shock of this expels God despite all that he learned in the Catholic Church.

Attitude in Israel Today

The PPC parties to Israel have found this notion universal; the injustice and abomination of this world are incomparable with the idea of a good God! The legionaries have pointed out that this entails an incorrect view of suffering and Redemption. Man himself brought sin into the world and suffering is the remedy – first with the Messiah, second of those united to him, and thirdly the woes of all mankind.

This tendency on the part of man to reason about God is no doubt laudable, but should be approached with common sense and caution. For the intellect cannot even remotely conceive him. God contains in himself attributes which would seem to us to be opposites but which are harmonious in him. No matter how much we strain the mind we will only end up representing God to ourselves as a superman; and he is infinitely beyond that. He exceeds even the capacity of the Blessed Virgin to access him.

On Being Deprived of Faith

When I was twenty-five years old I had a strange experience which has remained vivid in my mind and has been more than helpful to me. After confession one afternoon I was before the Sacred Heart altar in Whitefriar Street. Suddenly the world turned upside down for me. I realised that there was no God, and with him went everything that mattered in life. I assure you that what was left was a hell. I do not think that I could have lived on in the meaningless existence which was left. Perhaps

this condition lasted for five minutes; it seemed like an eternity. Then as abruptly as it came it passed and never since have I experienced even remotely like it. I knew that there was no God and the resulting thought was terrible. Life had suddenly become a torture. I think I would have gone mad if the ordeal continued.

I must explain that there was nothing emotional about all this. It was as tangible as if an organ had been removed from me and then suddenly replaced.

My own explanation is that I had been deprived of the gift of the Faith, or rather of all its sensible effects in order to make me understand what faith really is. I suppose that this would amount to placing me in the position which I have been presuming the purely natural mind to be in; that is of being able to contemplate the idea of God and the spiritual life but without capacity to accept it.

But this question may be asked: Those persons whom you imagine as being without faith do not feel the catastrophic effects that you did. Why not? They are able to lead normal and even happy lives. Why? I would suggest the explanation that they are not deprived of all that I was, which would make life intolerable and indeed unliveable. I was caused to experience a degree of loss which I would regard as one of the big lessons and blessings of my life; which gave me some light on what faith is. So I smile when people come to me and tell me that they have lost the faith. Because I know the reality – which is not their position.

Counting on Basis of Faith in All offer the Faith to All

So counting on the existence of every man, in different degrees of course, of that element of faith, let us face

up resolutely to the problem of offering Catholicism to the world. Our approach to men must be universal and indiscriminating. As we do not see beneath the surface of the person, we are not in a position to judge as to the degree of possibility in the individual case. Conversion is of such supernatural quality that it would be absurd to go by our own estimates. So we should try after every case. Before each approach we should summon to mind the distinctive legionary idea that we, united to Mary, are seeking to give Jesus to that soul. Not only does this correctly condition our mind for the approach but it is at the same time a potent prayer. Perhaps this regular advertence may seem artificial or an over-stressing. Not so, for all the time I find legionaries going by their own valuations of the possibility of cases, showing that they are under-stressing the divine side.

I think that the real deciding circumstance in regard to conversion is our own degree of conviction and the amount of the supernatural which we contribute to it. Our attitude should be the piling of weights into our side of the scale so that they will eventually outweigh the resistance of the other scale.

Here too remember the golden spiritual rule that if something is sought over a long period and by a number of people, it almost has to be granted. The idea there is that the unity and the perseverance are most likely to be a fruit of the Holy Spirit which indicates that he is working with us towards a favourable result.

Helping Protestants in Their Difficulties about Our Lady

Though she is the mother of every soul and therefore the greatest aid in converting, Our Lady appears to be an

obstacle and sometimes we push her in the background for that reason. How are we to present her in the simplest way? Point to the extreme force of Genesis 3: 'I will set enmities between thee and the woman, etc.' All modern scholarship has turned to the judgement that this woman is Mary. Such a stressing of the woman must mean that she has a place in Redemption and Christianity. Yet the Protestant suppression of Mary had unconsciously so taken charge that a very learned book like Dr Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* can be found abbreviating Genesis 3 as follows: 'God said to Satan, I will set enmities between you and the Redeemer.' Although the woman is placed first, and quite evidently with a significance, she has been so blurred by prejudice that she is skipped over by the mind as if the text had not included her at all.

Protestants having been taught that devotion to her only began after the Council of Ephesus in 431, which is early enough – goodness knows! But history can point further back than that. The inauguration of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire was in 328 and took the form of a consecration of the city to the Blessed Virgin. In other words the most important official ceremony after the emergence of Christianity from the catacombs was built around Our Lady. But long before that, as Cardinal Newman has proved, the New Eve doctrine is found as the central idea of sub-apostolic teaching.

What is Mary's place?

Protestants are not sure today but coming around. Why do they not deliberately think it out and give it some form of their own? They have been taught from their cradle that they must not pray to Mary: only to God. So propose to them the idea of talking to her as their mother. I have

known cases where that simple suggestion met their difficulty. If they do not like our methods of devotion to her, let them work out a system of their own. But they must do something.

A primary rule in dealing with others is: Listen rather than talk. Buy your right to talk by much listening. Avoid giving any impression of forcing things on people. If they feel they are being pressed, it is elementary psychology that they will react in the contrary dissection.

Our Formula for Approach

Our little formula has proved itself to be invaluable. But do not make it sound formidable, but rather casual. Put it in this way: 'By any chance did the thought of being a Catholic ever cross your mind?' This invites the truth and the reply will often be surprising. Even if the answer is no, it provides the opening for another question such as: 'Surely you should have a look at the Catholic Church which is the mother of all the Christian Churches?' They may grant the Church that status but retort that it became corrupt and had to be reformed. But point out that those reforms have drastically altered all doctrines, ending in such travesties of religion as the Mormons and the Jehovah Witnesses. Therefore the reform has destroyed itself and gone on to produce such fissuring that outside the Catholic Church there is no doctrine and no uniformity. Today the Protestant Churches are desperately trying to unite. But each effort to sew up a tear only produces another one elsewhere.

When you have established a contact, do not willingly let go. Your tenacity may be the condition which determines success. Sometimes a whole lifetime is required to land a big fish. A while ago a Jewish lady in America

died in the Church. We encountered her thirteen years previously when on holiday in Donegal. An unremitting correspondence was maintained with her. Eventually she asked for reception and died a month later.

A fact which emerged in that case, and which would have perhaps a great general importance, is that for a considerable time she had wished to be a Catholic but was deterred by the fear of a long instruction course. In two other cases of conversion known to us, the same circumstance was at work. They stated that they would not be able to undergo a long instruction; the ages of the three were 75, 80 and 92. When reassured on this point they at once demanded reception. Possibly the same fear operates in many other cases. Has instruction become so formidable a proposition as to frighten off people? Is too much detail being required as a condition of reception?

Conveying the Essentials

You know my own little proposition of the 'Living Core' of Catholicism which could be taught to an intelligent person in an hour. It is that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity came on earth to redeem fallen man. He united the baptised believers with himself in the Mystical Body of which he is the head. They live in him and he in them with a real interchange of life. They are his members who carry on his life on earth, and he pours his grace and power into them. Mary his mother is likewise mother of that body. Certain ones in the body are the channels of his special functions towards the body. The Pope represents him as the head of the body and as its authoritative, infallible teacher. The bishops and the priests are his local representatives. Baptism is the sacrament which unites the soul to the Mystical Body. Confirmation imparts the

Holy Spirit to strengthen the soul. Holy Orders give us priests. Matrimony provides for the growth of the body. Extreme Unction prepares it for death. Through Penance Christ forgives the sins of the body. The Eucharist is the food of the body and likewise gives us the Mass through which Christ continues daily and everywhere his sacrifice.

It seems to me that this very brief formula contains the essentials of Christianity. I know it is too compressed for practical purposes. But on the other hand how can one justify catechumenates of many years' duration which appear to represent a disproportionate demand on poor human nature and which must scare off multitudes? And remember that the people in question are not even armed with sacramental grace.

Other Protestant Difficulties

A formidable barrier to Protestants exists in confession. I have just now been dealing with one of the Kansas students about to enter the Church, who declares great fears on that score. Protestants have been brought up to regard confession with loathing, so that it must bulk big as an obstacle. It should be explained to Protestants that they can be shielded off so that the priest does not even see their face; that they can go to any priest anywhere, even in another city or country. We have been accustomed from our childhood to this difficult disclosure of self. It can seem awful to a person strange to it.

The papacy has always been controverted by Protestants. Accordingly an extremely important item should be brought to their notice. An article in *Maria Legionis* was recently devoted to the change made by the new Standard Bible which has been accepted by all the Protestant Churches. The change relates to the Petrine

Text, that is: 'Simon, thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.' Hitherto every Protestant without exception was taught that when saying 'rock' Christ was referring to himself and not to Peter. In the new Bible the text is made to read: 'Simon, thou art Peter the rock and upon this rock I will build my Church.' Which makes it clear beyond question that the Church was built on Peter. Protestants will now argue that this was only a personal grant to Peter, one not continued to his successors. This would be contrary to right sense. Why establish the papacy when least required, that is when the other apostles and contemporaries of Our Lord were still available to settle disputes?

The Catholic Church Our Only Justification

I have mentioned Newman. Let that tremendous phrase of his in the handbook be on your lips for it is what one might call a hall-marked pronouncement, that is it bears on its face the evidence of its truth. 'Either the Catholic Church is the living oracle of truth or else we have no idea whence we come or whither we are going.'

This is analogous to a pithy saying of the Methodist Tyrrel: 'Were the Catholic Church to die, all the other Churches can order their coffins.' Today these words sum up a self-evident situation.

In a recent discussion at our Pauline Circle, a Baptist lady challenged the Church of Ireland representatives to justify their use of infant baptism. She pointed out that there was no mention of it in scripture and that all the first baptisms were of adults. She insisted that consent and knowledge were necessary ingredients. She reduced them to silence, because in the end the only justification lies in the teaching of the Church which those outside it

do not accept. Therefore non-Catholic Churches which administer infant baptism are in a fix.

... Even for Eating Bacon and Eggs

A kindred impasse would reside in the fact that the prohibitions and injunctions of Deuteronomy and Leviticus are still in force so far as the Bible is concerned. These concern the keeping holy of the Sabbath Day which is Saturday; the limitation on travelling and working on that day; the prohibition of the eating of pork or hare. The modifications of all those prescriptions depend on the dispensing power of the Catholic Church. By what authority do the other Churches put aside that stern legislation of the Bible? Surely this is a point which must be settled before embarking on that appetising breakfast dish of bacon and eggs?

Milton has the following: 'Who does not know that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty? It needs no policies, nor stratagems nor licensing's to make it victorious.'

But it must be presented.

The truth is victorious in its essence. Our special aim must be to propose it with as much of Our Lady in it and as little of self as possible, hoping all the time that God will cause it to prevail. As this is a divine operation, it will not work out exactly as we would want it. We may feel what we say to be very convincing, but it makes no apparent impression. On the other hand there will be a breakthrough where you least expect. Recently I was talking to a man who had given up all belief at the age of fifteen. He was now twenty-five. He was scientific and like all of that tribe hard to deal with. Yet he seized on a remark of mine to which I had attached little value and declared that it solved his problem. The sequel was his

return to the sacraments a short time after. He was a real case of a big upset arising from a mere missing screw. We may not have the slightest notion as to where the trouble lies. But we do our best and the screw is back in place. It is a question of a spiritual problem the solution of which is not in our hands though we play an essential part.

But that is the very part which is providentially assigned to every person. Ozanam says that it is the divine arrangement that the action of one soul is required for the uplifting of another. Scripture says that faith comes by hearing and I think that this must be read in the narrowest sense of one person speaking and the other listening. Prayer alone will not suffice. So go out into the whole world and talk to every man.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is Incomparably the Best Devotion to the Holy Spirit

Once again I discuss with you the difficult subject of the Holy Spirit and Mary. I approach it in the hope of exhibiting some additional facets – in the way that the gleaner goes over the harvest field collecting the grains which the reapers have left.

No legionary feature is more distinctive than its realisation of the union between the Holy Spirit and Mary. Addressing the Holy Spirit, the Legion Promise declares:

But I know that Thou, who hast come to
regenerate the world in Jesus Christ,
Hast not willed to do so except through Mary;
That without her we cannot know or love
Thee;
That is by her, and to whom she pleases,
when she pleases and in the quantity and
manner she pleases,

That all gifts and virtues and graces are
administered;
And I realise that the secret of a perfect
legionary service
Consists in a complete union with her who is
so completely united to Thee.

As our membership and everyday existence depend on our understanding of this divine arrangement, we must seek for lights on the subject.

Previously I have referred to the objection launched against Catholicism by a sort of chorus of Protestant thinkers, to the effect that the function in grace which we are ascribing to Mary is precisely that which in the divine order is attributed to the Holy Spirit; they saw we have transferred it all to her.

Protestant Objections Find Echo in Some Catholics

Formerly the pet accusation was that we put Mary in the place of Jesus. Now that there is a vogue in favour of the Holy Spirit, this charge is ingeniously modernised by alleging a similar trespass on his rights; Mary has taken over from him! On the surface there is a plausibility about this. It is true that those bestowings of grace which we credit to the Blessed Virgin belong essentially to the Holy Spirit. The reason why we associate her with them is because we believe he has united her to all his dealings with men, and that it is his will that men should recognise this fact and turn to her and honour her.

But it is possible that those critics are committing themselves to the assertion that God gives no field of action to the Blessed Virgin or the saints or the angels; that he employs no agencies save inanimate ones like the

natural elements? Surely they recognise that God confers an agency in grace on many men? If to them, why not to those who have passed from this lower state to Heaven and are now reigning there? There is no inconsistency here.

However that may be, those persons can see nothing else in our attitude towards Mary but a usurpation of the divine rights. They regard us as pushing the Divinity out of a large portion of his domain and handing it over to a creature whom we petition and thank exactly as if it were she alone who is in charge of the whole transaction. Those critics are disturbed at the enormity of this. But they are not alone. They find many today in the Catholic camp who agree with them that the popular attitude to Mary goes too far and must be cut down. The result of this is being shown in the serious diminution of Marian devotion.

In particular it is sought to throw the Legion onto the defensive. Its picture of Mary and her role in grace is viewed by some as a species of fanaticism. This causes one to ask: Have those persons read Chapter 8 of the *De Ecclesia* decree of the Vatican Council? For in no way does the Legion doctrine go beyond that decree! If they have not read the decree, that puts them in a peculiar light. If they have read it and rejected it, any words of theirs on the subject of Mary are of no consequence.

Going Direct

Now as a practical matter where would the process of pruning begin or end in regard to Mary? At what point in that descending scale can it be logically said: 'Just here!' If, as alleged, the Holy Spirit is waiting to receive us without intervention by Mary, and to load us with his gifts directly, why bring her in at all?

This has an air of propriety about it. Why should we go by a roundabout route when we can take a straight road? But even in the natural order, that simplification can be misleading. How many direct roads are in practice not negotiable, so that one has to proceed by circuitous ways? One has to go around a lake. One has to zigzag through hilly territory.

To this it will be retorted that in the supernatural order there is no need for indirect routes or expedients such as the Blessed Virgin; we can and should go straight to the Holy Spirit!

I dwell on this type of argument because its effect on thoughtless persons ignorant of Christian doctrine is damaging. If doubt is caused to enter in, even to the smallest extent, fatal injury has been done to Our Lady's maternal status. If there is any misgiving in us as to the addressing of her, then she has been artfully manoeuvred out of her true position as described to us by the Catholic Church.

What God Wanted for Mary

But there is a vicious defect in all that reasoning. It disregards the main fact in the situation which is the divine intention. Instead of ruling out Mary, the divine purpose was to build on her. God willed to give her responsibility and real authority, and to abide by her use of it. This was by way of a divine prime policy. He wished to make her the very pivot of his plan of Redemption. Everything in it was to depend on the free cooperation of the virgin. The Messiah would not come except with her consent. Moreover that consent was given in the name of the whole human race and would be instrumental in their salvation.

What a mighty figure all this depicts! But that personage had already been sketched out in prophecy. Thousands of years previously God had promised her. She is none other than the long awaited Woman of Genesis. The New Eve who with the New Adam will reverse the Fall. The immensity of the office committed to her is breathtaking. What resemblance is there between that greatness and what the minimisers grant her? The answer is that there is no resemblance. The Catholic concept of Mary and the common Protestant one are as far apart as the North and South Poles. To fulfil the Protestant one any Jewish maiden would be adequate, because it asks for no more than ordinary motherhood. But to rise to the destiny delineated in the Genesis prophesy only one person would serve.

No other person in all human history but that one would meet those divine specifications. She was chosen before the ages. Recall the phrase of St Augustine that she was the fruit of an eternal deliberation by the Most Holy Spirit. Then we see the exactness with which she was prepared for her unique mission, the Immaculate Conception providing the basis for sublime adornment. To apply to her some grandiloquent expressions of scripture, she is the magnificence of God. Yet he continues to add on further splendour.

Remember also what Fr Faber says to the effect that God is only revealing progressively to us the wonders he has done to Mary. As the minds of men become accustomed to each new one, another dawns on our horizon.

But if she has had virtually nothing to do, why that eternal preparation and accumulation of gifts? Certainly it would be meaningless. But so colossal, so nearly touching on infinity was the part she had to play that each and

every one of those embellishments was not alone fitting but necessary. She was being, so to speak, ordained not only to be the deliberate agent of the Incarnation, but also to be the channel to men of all its outpourings.

The Un-cooperating Statue of the Protestants

If the Protestant and Catholic visions of Mary are poles apart, likewise are their programmes of the application of Redemption to man. Primitive Protestantism requires from man virtually nothing more than an act of faith in Jesus Christ. This entitles him to the merits of Christ and he is saved. No contribution of his own is demanded. His category is that of a block of wood or stone out of which the sculptor, who is Christ, carves an un-cooperating statue.

On the other hand Catholicism opens up to man the responsible part of helping towards his own redemption. God says to man: 'In fear and trembling work out your own salvation (Phil 2:12). So man must add to faith the acts of a Christian life, comprising – let it be said – apostleship. Then the life of man becomes a process of sanctification which can aim at supreme heights. As St Paul says: 'I live no longer by myself; it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The Vatican Council declares Mary, supremely elevated though she is in Heaven, is nonetheless the model which God has in mind for all men.

That is the Christian scheme. In its working out Mary's part continues on as primary. She was the representative of mankind; she has become its queen. She was the one and only possible bride; she continues on as the essential mother. She affords to her children every grace and they are dependent on her. The Legion system is built upon her.

The objectors would say that this importance of hers takes from the primacy of God. But if God enacted this dispensation, how can he be at any loss thereby?

A Union Stopping Short Only at Identity

What the Holy Spirit has been pleased to do has been to establish between himself and Mary a union so profound as to stop short only at identity. There is no Incarnation but neither is there any separation of aims or conflicts or interests. Therefore in going to Mary one necessarily goes to the Holy Spirit; and in going to the Holy Spirit one necessarily includes Mary. This does not mean that we have to view this whole operation consciously. The mind may have to be content to concentrate on one thing at a time. Our approach takes in both provided the opposite intention does not exist.

The simpler person, whose prayer might largely be the Rosary without specific adherence to the Holy Spirit, would nonetheless be pouring himself out to the Holy Spirit all the time. Here may I interject that when I link the Rosary with the simpler person, it is far from being in a derogatory sense. Most of the methods which we have proposed for substituting the Rosary have unquestionably less of the spirit of prayer in them.

You will recall the handbook suggestion that the best devotion to the Holy Spirit is the Rosary. This we could expand into the larger saying that we supremely touch the heart of the Holy Spirit by loving his masterpiece Mary, and by recognising the great things he has done to her and through her.

If Mary is the choicest work of his hands and we do not see things so but in reverse, we are only caricaturing the divine idea. If he has brought her to such a pitch of

immensity, and yet we see her only as an excrescence, then we are certainly not in line with God's will; in that case there has to be loss whether there is culpability or not. The person outside the Church or the non-Marian Catholic may be acting out of ignorance. But that does not turn wrong into right.

Any loss of grace is a catastrophe. But a special gravity would attach to the putting aside of the very keystone of the plan of God, and Mary is nothing less than this. Newman has asserted as a historical fact that wherever Mary was left out, belief in the divinity of Our Lord became fatally obscured. An analogous process would operate in regard to the Third Divine Person when Mary is put aside. The old description of him as the Forgotten Paraclete might become true again. Or a wrong inclination towards him could show itself, a tone almost of dictation, of knowing for certain that we are perfectly interpreting him, of demanding his spectacular gifts to use as we think fit. If we are looking at him *with* Mary it is psychological that her humility will be our atmosphere. We will not be found laying down the law to him.

An Improper Attitude Gives Entry to Evil Spirits

Improper attitude could be dangerous. It could invite interference of malign spirits. The scripture cautions that these are always prowling around seeking for those whom they may ensnare. If our behaviour offers them an opening towards us, they will be only too willing to oblige by supplying us with the sort of thing we want. They can give us emotions, glowing ideas and their own type of gifts, all of which would be in tune with our desires but which would certainly not work out well for us in the end.

In this connection let us not forget that one of Our Lady's special spheres of power is that of restraining her evil spirits. Your legionary symbolism places this before your eyes. Her hands are outspread in the attitude of distributing grace. Her feet are set upon the serpent's head to illustrate her domination over him. This is something which God does not deign to exercise himself. He said at the beginning: 'I will set enmities between you and the woman' (Gn 3:15).

Have I been overplaying the influence of those evil beings? I do not think so. The saints and the spiritual writers have spoken strongly on this subject and it would be rash to regard them as exaggerating. Moreover we see it around us in all the sects and freak religions: people assuming that the Holy Spirit is at their beck and call, and that they are authorised to speak on his behalf. Every sort of folly has been formulated in his name and devastation has been the product.

I do not say that deficiencies in devotion to Mary are the only cause of such aberrations, because heresies have been built around Mary herself. Her doctrine can be perverted just like any other doctrine. Therefore the over-riding consideration must be the keeping in strict line with the Church. For the Church is the pillar and the ground for the truth. It is the authentic voice of the Holy Spirit on earth and there is no other.

All that said, I revert to my theme that devotion to the Holy Spirit must be Marian to be orthodox and safe. Wherever Mary has on any pretext been edged out, things will always proceed to go astray. The Holy Spirit departs with her; just as of old she took the Divine Infant with her. 'There was no room for them in the Inn at Bethlehem' (Lk 2:4-7).

To separate Mary from the Holy Spirit would be analogous to the separating of Jesus and Mary. No less in the one dispensation than in the other is her presence divinely insisted on. Mary with the babe in her arms is as perfect a representation of the Church as Mary in the Cenacle in the midst of the disciples after the descent of the Holy Spirit. Remove her from either and the picture is mutilated.

It is easy to understand the degree of dependence in which the Divine Babe was placed towards its mother. The closeness and the necessity of her relation to the Holy Spirit does not lend itself to such a simple comprehension, but their union was no less intimate and remains as necessary. Her agency was to characterise the whole plan, from the first prophesy to the consummation of the world and no doubt even beyond that.

Mary is Not an Optional

It was first to last God's abiding principle to exalt her to the maximum extent but would still leave her a creature. The latter she had to remain so as to be totally representative of mankind, but she was brought to the borders of the divine. This was strictly necessary for the purpose of the Incarnation. As she conceived by the Holy Spirit, so the same Holy Spirit makes all the outpourings of the Incarnation issue through her. This is essential in order that her mothering of men would be an authentic motherhood. She genuinely administers to her children their nourishment which is the Holy Spirit.

To be vested with power so vast she had to possess an affinity with the Holy Spirit so as to be utterly responsive to him in their partnership of grace. She is meant to be the responsible administrator of their joint treasure. 'She manages it as by a mother's right' (St Pius X).

Such is the woman who realises the prophecy of Genesis, and such is the office to which she has been divinely appointed. This carries with it the obligation of honouring her whom God has made so much of. We need not fear to attribute too much to her or to let our love take wings. Imperatively she must not be relegated to a corner, still less excluded, as the minimising brigade would have it. In the divine system devotion to Mary is not an optional.

We can apportion our prayers according to our individual likings. Should it be our special attraction to address them all directly to the Holy Spirit, there would of course be nothing against. But the idea seems artificial as excluding the other Divine Persons and the sacred humanity of Jesus. However, it must be stipulated that there is no slighting of Mary involved. Furthermore it should all the time be borne in mind that it is her maternal recommendation of those prayers which carries them to their objective.

Mary's role towards her child prominently embraces the aspect of protection. But when we analyse her relation to the Holy Spirit, it is found that the same element enters in. At first sight this appears almost disrespectful to him, yet it recommends itself as a positively necessary idea. Although the circumstances look to be different, the same economy is at work. In the one case it was the Body of Jesus which required guardianship. In the case of the Holy Spirit that protection takes the different form of safeguarding doctrine and proper approach. To an extent which we cannot realise, it is Mary's presence which assures due order and sanity in our dealings with the Third Divine Person. Without her he recedes into the shadows. It is she who as a practical proposition makes him familiar to us as a person. The mind in visualising them together

has necessarily to form some image of him equivalent to hers. This renders him vivid to us. Likewise her relations with the other Divine Persons aid towards clarifying his individual distinctiveness and mission. All this has the effect of eliminating incorrectness of doctrine.

Towards Advance in Theology of the Holy Spirit

The Theology of the Holy Spirit is literally of infinite delicacy. It is understood that there was a widespread desire at the Vatican Council that a statement, somewhat of the character of Chapter VIII of the *De Ecclesia* decree, should be legislated on the Holy Spirit. But this was considered to be premature: the theology on the subject being still under intense study.

Chapter VIII is a progression in that direction and we must be most grateful for it. In summarising so effectively the role of Our Lady, it is likewise casting light on the Holy Spirit who manifests himself most clearly through her. 'The Holy Spirit is revealed through the Mother of God,' says Bulgakov.

On those higher levels of Our Lady's power to form us in the Holy Spirit and pour into us his influences, our thoughts must dwell. Because every new day brings evidence of the importance of the mission which has been allotted to the Legion. St Louis Marie de Montfort's formula for conquest is a brief one: 'We must begin by blessing Mary. Then at once the Holy Spirit, seeing in us the proper dispositions, will come in to us in abundance and fill us to overflowing.'

The world has been going through a lean time. It is not a little frightening to find that the Legion seems to represent in a unique way the pastoral principle of the Church; that is the seeking out of every soul with intent to bring it

to Christ as he commanded. We are definitely trying to fulfil that commission which is seemingly impossible, and we are making strange, unexpected headway in every direction. Even at this stage it can be said that the Legion is converting multitudes.

The legionaries seem to be provided with all that they need in their work. It must not be taken as a matter of course that they are able to go to persons of every religion and of none and to present the Faith in convincing form. In view of their simplicity and ordinariness it has to be granted that they are the output point of divine forces, conquering graces. Quite plainly these are being lavished on them by reason of their wholehearted offering of themselves to Mary who apparently is affording them easy access to the Most Blessed Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Islam's New Look

In few departments of its activity has the Legion made more striking advance than in its approach to Islam. It has been cordially received everywhere by Moslems and has been able to enter into discussion with them on the subject of our respective religions. This is of major importance in as much as Islam was universally presumed to be unapproachable. It would not be proper that this should continue to be the case having regard to the fact that Islam is now suggesting that its numbers exceed Catholicism and that in Africa there are two Moslems for every Catholic.

The Legion contacts with them have been of such a friendly and useful character as to suggest that the divine help is being granted to the legionaries. But of course it has to be borne in mind that the approach has been very respectfully made and along lines which have their appeal to the Moslems.

Jesus and Mary Claimed as Moslems

Our method has been to propose to them the strange position of Jesus and Mary in the Koran. I say 'strange'

because their lives are sketched out with considerable approximation to accuracy, much in fact as they are in the apocryphal gospels, and yet they are not of a piece with the body of the Koran, seeming to have no connection with it. A statement of mine to this effect and my query as to what that holy pair are doing in the Koran was replied to by the Dublin Islamic Society as follows: 'Because they were devout Moslems.'

This answer, while it proves the suitability of the Legion approach to them, is startling to us. Because few, if any, among us will ever have heard the assertion that Jesus and Mary were zealous Moslems! How could this be, we ask ourselves, considering that Mahomet was not born until AD 570 and that it was not until forty years later that he had his visions which inaugurated Islam?

But now we find that we are called upon to adjust very radically our ideas on the subject of Islam. The Dublin Islamic Society further declares to us that Mahomet was *not* the founder of Islam and that they regarded the term 'Mohammedanism' as opprobrious. They insist that Mahomet was only a prophet, and that their religion went back through Jesus Christ, whom likewise they venerate as a prophet, and through the whole Jewish genealogical tree to Abraham.

Two Lines of Descent

The Islamic Society of South Africa asserts the very same, and discussions with a Pakistani Group have been to the same effect: all of these maintain that Islam did not originate with Mahomet but with Abraham and came down not only through Ishmael but also through the Jewish Patriarchs and Prophets and through Jesus Christ to Mahomet. Apparently, therefore, this is now a general

point of view among Moslems so that we must modify the ideas universally held among us that the line of descent of Islam was indeed from Abraham but that it came down through Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham by Hagar, and through the Arab people.

Abraham Rejoins the Banished Hagar. He and Ishmael build the Kaaba

An article in the November 1978 number of the *American Geographical Magazine* by Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, Director of the Islamic Centre, Washington D.C., introduces a new note and adds a new dimension to the situation: Abraham after abandoning Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert of Zamzam, is declared to have returned to them. Later on he and Ishmael built there the original Kaaba or House of God for the worship of the one true God. Though initially false to that trust, the Kaaba was restored to it by Mahomet. Around it would grow up the town of Mecca, and the Kaaba would become the centre of Islam.

In Chapter VI – 84 the Koran speaks of God as giving Isaac and Jacob to Abraham as son and grandson, but quite evidently not in the biblical sense of constituting them as the forbears of the Chosen People, that is the Jews, because it was on Ishmael that Islam was founded. From the beginning Mahomet viewed his descent as through Ishmael and the Arab people. But this leaves the problem as to how Ishmael's descendants can claim a joint possession with the Jews and the Christians of the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus and Mary Present but without Function

Moreover why are Jesus and Mary assigned such a unique place in the genealogy of Islam? The Koran does not

limit itself to specifying their names, as in the case of the other Jewish personages. Jesus is exhibited as greater than Mahomet and Mary as the most blessed among women – why is this? We are driven to suppose that not only did Mahomet regard them as outshining all the other figures but as being somehow necessary to religion in general and to Islam in particular. Yet they are definitely out of context in the Koran. They have no function. Nevertheless they capture the stage.

It would seem therefore as if we must take seriously this new version of Islam presented to us. But one must ask whether all the Islamic world accepts that version. Do all Arab Moslems receive the Bible inclusive of the Gospel? If they do, the Islamic problem is simplified for us to an immense extent. Because then, without laying ourselves open to any counterattack that we are seeking to convert them, we can explain that our purpose is to help them to appreciate fully a vital portion of Islam which at present they are only seeing dimly, that is the Christian part.

No doubt the cause of this is that though the references to Jesus and Mary are numerous and highly significant, they are small in proportion to the ordinary material of the Koran and have therefore been obscured in the mind of the Moslem reader. So it is imperative that attention be directed towards them. It should be emphasised that they are really like diamonds lying half-hidden in the great mass of surrounding material. Their significance is such as to carry with it some obligation, just as the other items of the Koran do. This could take the shape of meditation on them or acts of devotion to them. Moslems have never been instructed to that effect.

Moreover it is not a case of simple references. The entire lives of Jesus and Mary are recounted in the Koran with

an approximation to the vividness of the gospel. When these things are pointed out to the Moslems, they are most intrigued.

Pointing to Christian Roots

No, it is not because Jesus and Mary were merely zealous Moslems that they are so proclaimed in the Koran. The explanation must lie in some sort of inner association with Christianity by Mahomet in his pre-Islamic days. It has always been recognised that both Judaism and Christianity played moulding parts in connection with the Koran. It is certain that Mahomet was acquainted with both of these religions and affected by them. It is probable that the Syriac Apocryphal Gospel was used by the Nestorian Christians at the time of Mahomet and was well known to him. These things had their influence on the Koran. Mahomet's statement that it was the Archangel Gabriel who appeared to him in his trances and communicated to him the Koranic revelation, cannot be viewed by us as anything but a throw-back to the origin of Christianity.

The *National Geographical* article, already mentioned, advances far beyond that and speaks of 'the Moslem as being conscious of a common religious heritage with Judaism and Christianity, the other great monotheistic faiths that rose amid the deserts of the Middle East. For to a Moslem, Islam is God's revelation made to Adam and Noah, the religion of David and the Prophets of Israel, and of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles. For the final time, in its purity, the true religion was revealed to the Prophet Mahomet.'

No more comprehensive claim than this could be made. Islam proclaims itself to be the culminating point of World-Religion. As the Old Law was the foundation of

the New Law, so Islam is the superstructure of the Old and New Laws! They existed for Islam, and Islam purified them!

Before proceeding to analyse this, I add another item which is too related to be omitted and which has decisive bearing. Among the Christians of at least one of the Middle East Arab countries, the firm tradition exists that when Mahomet first turned to religion it was to become a Christian, and that then he began to preach that religion. This he did with such success that his horizons widened. He began to think in terms of a new religion more applicable to his surroundings and which would carry on from Christianity, which had been expelled from Arabia in 570 by the Persians. Incidentally that year was the date of the birth of Mahomet.

Still more strange is the story, widely accepted in the Middle Ages and referred to in Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England* (Vol. 1, p. 316) that Mahomet was a cardinal and that it was out of disappointment at not having been made Pope that he started Islam. It is hard to believe that even a legend could take such a form unless Mahomet had some very close association with Catholicism. It is to be mentioned that the term 'cardinal' was already coming into use at that time.

For another account of a very different kind I turn to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (9th Edition, Vol. 16). I summarise:

That Mahomet did not independently produce his ideas is indisputable. Nor is it to be doubted that he derived them from the Hanifs with whom he came in touch through a cousin of his wife, Khadija who

was herself a Hanif. A profound influence was exercised on the Hanifs and on the Prophet himself by the Christian monks in the desert.

Mahomet a Baptised Christian?

The early origins of Islam are ascribed generally to Jewish sources, common among Arabs, including almost all the stories of the Koran and a great part of its laws. The theological language of Islam is full of Jewish words. But all the foregoing was only the leaven added later to the primitive impulses. Neither in truth can Christianity be viewed as the proper source of Islam, but it can hardly be wrong to conclude that the nameless witnesses to the Gospel, unmentioned in Church history, that is the Christian monks, scattered the seed from which sprang the germ of Islam. The Hanifs stood nearer to Christianity than to Judaism, and were sometimes called by the same name as the Christian monks.

When the situation of the Moslems in Mecca became intolerable, Mahomet advised them to fly to Abyssinia; the Abyssinian Christians being quite looked upon as their religious kinsmen. Furthermore it is stated that for a considerable time Mahomet retained a feeling of solidarity with the Christians and even set aside a portion of the mosque for them to perform their ceremonies.

It cannot be denied that the foregoing appears to establish at least a very close association between Mahomet and Christianity. It tends towards confirming that story that he was at one time a Baptised Christian. Actually the Moslems admit that a veil of silence covers Mahomet's life for fifteen years; that is from twenty-five to forty years of age.

Although much of his system was adopted from the Jews, Mahomet soon broke away from any friendship with them. As part of this he altered the original Islamic practice of turning towards Jerusalem in prayer, substituting the direction to Mecca and making the Kaaba the centre-point of Moslem worship. Also he changed the principal day of public worship from the Sabbath to Friday at midday. From the Jews he had incorporated the idea of an animal sacrifice but limited it to the time of the Meccan Festival. The Moslems were to fulfil this sacrifice as much as possible even if they could not be actually present on the spot. This is still maintained during the annual festival to Mecca when most Moslems arrange for an animal sacrifice. Large herds of sheep are available to the pilgrims who can wield the knife themselves or employ a butcher.

This adoption from the Jewish system of an animal sacrifice was a step backward. Because Islam declares that it accepts the Bible, the whole theme of which is that animal sacrifice only prefigured the Sacrifice of Christ and would lose its meaning at his death.

Problem of Redemption

Islam believes in the Fall and in Original Sin, and that at birth every child of Adam is tainted by that sin except Jesus and Mary. But it does not teach the Redemption. So in what way is mankind freed from Original Sin and the other effects of the Fall?

Moreover, as more primitive ideas become outmoded, the notion of sacrificing animals becomes repugnant and is rejected. How will Islam explain away its inevitable pushing aside of the practice which is commanded by the Koran? The Koran cannot be altered.

The special practices of Islam are five in number, styled the Five Pillars of Islam: (1) Profession of the unity of God; (2) Prayer five times a day in which the Kaaba must be faced; (3) The giving of alms; (4) Fasting during Ramadan; (5) Observance of the festival of Mecca.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is probably excessively severe in its appraisal of the early days of Islam when it declares that: 'No God but the one God' was the entire sum of its theology, and that as Islam expanded into an Arab Confederation it lost its religious character and became to a very large extent a rallying ground and a drill system for the community. But of course some colour is lent to this by the fact that conversion to Islam was made a condition of surrender for all the tribes conquered in battle by the Moslems. They were anti-Islam before the battle and after their submission they were Moslems!

In the latest edition of that encyclopaedia the note of criticism is more lightly struck, but one would feel, too lightly with consequent hurt to the value of the article.

Ishmael not Isaac?

The Koran is specific that it was Ishmael, and not Isaac, whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice, the other details of the biblical account being the same, such as the substitution of the ram for the human victim. It is told that it was at this very spot that the Kaaba was raised. The annual pilgrimage to it instituted by Abraham and Ishmael was continued by succeeding Arab generations. But pagan practices were gradually introduced and at the time of Mahomet, Arabian heathenism had become the traditional form of worship. The gods were many. Idols were in every home and homage was paid to them as the people went out and in. There was a manufacture of idols

and a busy trade in them. But above them all stood Allah, the highest and universal god. These lesser gods are said to have been regarded as children of Allah.

Mahomet stripped all those gods of divinity, reducing them to the level of subordinate spirits or devils. He abolished all idols and images both in the homes and outside them. Each tribe and section in Arabia had its own deity in honour of whom it had installed an idol. To each was directed a ceremonial and the sum-total was a formidable heathenish worship with its heavy grip on the people. It is easy to understand that when Mahomet proceeded to introduce Islam about 612, he encountered opposition. As the Meccans saw things, he was hitting at their livelihood. Gradually he made converts and soon a bitter persecution broke out against them. In 622, which is called the year of the Hegira, he and a group of his followers fled to Medina, 200 miles to the North.

Medina and Mecca

Mahomet was kindly received in Medina and listened to. He gained many recruits. In 630 he assembled an army of 10,000 and attacked Mecca. After vicissitudes he took the town and from that day Mecca has remained the pinnacle of the Moslem world which boasts of adherents in unexpected places, for example forty million in Russia, seventeen million in China.

In Mecca his first act was to proceed to the Kaaba and make the seven prescribed circuits. Then he went inside the edifice and looked around. What met his eye was of course painfully familiar to him: the bewildering array of religious objects, each standing for one of the multitudinous creeds of the country. It was what he had come to abolish.

Mahomet Displays an Attitude which would be Typical of a Catholic

Among them an image of a quite different type had somehow inserted itself. It was a picture of the Virgin Mary with her child. We know of it through an Arab historian El Agraqi. He writes as follows on the subject: 'It was on the nearest column of the gateway of the Kaaba and represented Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus, Son of Mary) on her knees and leaning against her breast. On both of them be blessing! The picture, probably of Syrian origin, was surrounded by fetishes and pictures of pagan images which turned the Kaaba into a pandemonium. Each tribe placed there its own special deity and these amounted to a total of three hundred and sixty idols. When Mahomet captured Mecca in the year eight of the Hegira, that is AD 630, he had all those figures destroyed, making a single exception – that of Jesus. The apostle of Allah had water brought from Zamzam. At his order a linen cloth was then drenched with it. Then placing the palm of his hand over the representations of Isa ibn Maryam and of his mother – on both of whom be salvation! – he said: "Obliterate every picture in this place with the exception of these which my hands are protecting".'

Thus is recounted a happening which is not merely picturesque but of extreme importance. Why did Mahomet, at a moment when an iconoclastic fervour filled him, make a drastic exception in favour of an image of Our Lady and her son? Unquestionably it meant that he did not regard the image as an idol or objectionable object but as something to which veneration was due. How could this be except that he had the outlook of a Catholic upon it? Remember that he did not indulge in any scrutiny of the medley of images with a view to

a selection. He intended to destroy them all with the exception of that one picture well known to him from his previous intimate knowledge of the Kaaba. A Protestant Reformer would have destroyed it. Mahomet on the contrary not only showed it public respect but retained it in the Kaaba. The lesson of this is evident: Mahomet not only understood the role of the Virgin Mary and the legitimacy of an image of her, but also agreed with it. How could he think thus except that he had been a Catholic?

The Big Question

Now let us endeavour to put all that miscellaneous mass of evidence into an answer to the question: How is it possible for Islam to present the claim that it inherits Judaism and Christianity in a real, genuine way? Merely to incorporate into Islam a number of items from those other religions would not represent a true inheriting. The supernatural heritage from Abraham was intended to follow the natural order. Isaac received it from Abraham and transmitted it down to the Chosen People. Christianity in turn was a true inheritance from Judaism. But in what sense can Islam claim to have either Judaism or Christianity in its family tree?

I think that the most that can be said of any association of Mahomet with the Jews was that he may have known many of them. Nowhere is there any suggestion of a closer relationship. Then how is it that he could claim that Islam through him is the heir to the Covenant which came down through Isaac and the Jewish line of descent? And he does make that association, claiming the Old Testament, the Patriarchs and Prophets, terminating with Jesus Christ, then on to the New Testament which he likewise claims as true part of Islam.

I repeat that it is through this very channel of heredity that Islam claims to possess descent from Abraham. It is the case that Islam places Ishmael as the first link between Abraham and that chain, but how this could be so is not explained, for Ishmael and his descendants had nothing to do with the Jewish line of descent. The racial line of descent was from Ishmael down through the Arabs to Mahomet, an independent line altogether. No Islamic document which I have ever seen attempts to solve this anomaly, nor even makes reference to it.

A Sensational Answer

Here I am going to propound a solution which at first sight is sensational but which would give a legitimacy to Islam's claim and which would impart substance to Mahomet's assertion that he was a true heir to Judaism and Christianity; it being understood that we are looking at the entire transaction from the point of view of Mahomet, that is accepting his revelations for the purposes of argument.

My proposition is that Mahomet did in fact become a Christian during his pre-Islamic life; and that the various evidences already quoted to that effect are justified.

In that case, Mahomet, believing that St Gabriel was making to him a new annunciation that he was to purify and develop religion, would consider himself to be in an analogous position to that of Our Lady herself at the time of her Annunciation. As she was a Jew and true heir to Judaism, so was he as a Christian, heir to both Christianity and Judaism. In no other way could Mahomet make claim to an inheritance from Judaism. But if he judged himself to be a Christian, he could logically make that claim.

As a Christian, he would have received with Jesus Christ all that Jesus was heir to and all that Jesus promulgated. Speaking as a new Prophet appointed by the Angel Gabriel, Mahomet could reasonably believe that he was the heir to all the Judaeo-Christian history and revelations, and divinely commissioned to carry it on and reform it through Islam.

In This Way Might Justify Claim

Only in this way could Islam claim inheritance from Isaac. It is no use for Islam to protest that Mahomet received it from Ishmael. The Covenant was categorically declared by God as *not* descending through Ishmael. The passage of Genesis declaring this is as follows: 'God said to Abraham: Sara thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for a perpetual covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have also heard thee. Behold, I will bless him and increase and multiply him exceedingly; he shall beget twelve chiefs, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sara will bring forth to thee at this time in the next year' (17:19-21).

You will shrink from the very suggestion that Mahomet was entitled to regard himself as being placed in the same position as the Blessed Virgin and similarly honoured by an annunciation of the Angel Gabriel. But my point here is that *if* Mahomet was then a Christian and *if* he believed that he was divinely commissioned to reform existing religion, then it would be legitimate for him to regard himself as heir through Jesus and Mary to Christianity and Judaism back to Isaac and Abraham. I repeat: in what other way could he, a descendant of Ishmael, rationally claim to be the descendant of Isaac and heir to the Covenant?

The Compiling of the Koran

Islam teaches that it was in the grotto of Mount Hara that the angel came to Mahomet bringing the Koran which had been written on a table in the seventh heaven. Gabriel had received it in one volume but he only communicated it to Mahomet bit by bit and over a period of twenty-three years. Mahomet did not write any of it down. It was recorded haphazardly by listeners. When he died, the Koran existed only in scattered fragments. The Caliph laid the duty of collection on Zayd a former slave of Mahomet, then twenty-three years old. Zayd says that he brought together the revelation from pieces written on flat stones or on scraps of paper or parchment or leaves of palm trees, but mostly from the recollections of men. From all this miscellaneous assortment he compiled a fair copy. It had no sort of approval and quarrels broke out over it. In AD 650 the matter reached a climax and the task was entrusted to Zayd and three others to prepare a canonical edition. They accumulated as much material as possible and made a selection. This was approved; then every likely rival to that version was destroyed. It may be wondered how the original form of the Koran managed to survive such a dispersion into small fragments and such a drastic re-assembling of them, all depending on a sanction given by Caliph Uthman about twenty years after Mahomet's death, and on a technical revision about AD 682. That final result is the present Koran, which St Gabriel described as a single volume in his hands, and which Islam declares to be divine.

Considering that those original fragments were not numbered, how was it possible to fix the order in which they were to be placed? And if a thousand of the pieces were the same, did they stand for a thousand different

statements by the Prophet, or did they represent duplicates of what he said on a single occasion? If some of them were inaccurate reporting's of what the Prophet had said, how was this to be determined?

Puzzling Aspects

Except as regards length (about 80,000 words), there is no comparing of the Koran with the New Testament. The never-ending theme of the Koran is that God knows all things; that he is indulgent and merciful, and that torments await the infidel and the unjust. There is much about warring down one's enemies, much about booty and about the vengeance of God; this is indeed what we might call the tone of the Koran. Maledictions are directed against the Jews but not against the Christians. In fact it is insisted that the nearest in love to the Believers are the Christians.

The idea of a spiritual life and growth in it is missing. Its inspirational quality is definitely weak. I do not see in it anything which could be classed as original thinking. Much of it is just stereotyped words and phrases.

There is much 'awkwardness' in the Koran which is certain to cause trouble in the future, and it is to be borne in mind that the Koran cannot be altered.

1. It specifically encourages religious war, insisting: 'When you encounter the infidels, strike off their heads until you have made a great slaughter of them.' There are too many 'blood pages' as if war not peace is to be the aim of life.
2. The animal sacrifice already referred to.
3. Mahomet's establishment of a limited polygamy.
4. The episode called the Nocturnal Adventure will create dissent at a future more sophisticated time. One night

St Gabriel called for Mahomet, bringing with him a flying steed which transported the Prophet to the seven heavens. In these Mahomet encountered and chatted familiarly with God, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Joseph and John. Also he prayed with them. God himself declared that a Moslem was to pray one hundred times a day. When Moses heard this, he told Mahomet to go back and point out to God that people would not pray to that extent. So Mahomet made his petition for less and God reduced it to forty times a day. Still Moses thought this too much and in successive interviews Mahomet secured progressive reductions ending in the present statutory five times a day. Whereupon Mahomet returned to earth. All this paints a heaven brought down to a child's level of thought. It possesses the fantastic quality of a dream; it certainly does not come up to one's idea of a vision.

Mahomet was born in Mecca in AD 570 and died in Medina in 632.

Towards a Happy Outcome

Fr Malik OP makes the observation that Islam has only been permitted by God to continue on in history because one day it will come under the sweet obedience of Christ.

St Louis M Is Also Pope St J

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So perhaps you will bear with this preamble. Not all prefaces have utility but I think this one has. So I ask your patience while I plough through the tale of my original contact with the book at the age of about twenty-nine, up to when I had not even as much as heard of De Montfort. The time was not long after the St Vincent de Paul Society had acquired Myra House.

One evening I passed a group of the Brothers who were listening to one of their number talking. I stopped to listen and found that he had a book in his hands which he was animatedly discussing. It was the *True Devotion*. His description did not hold me but I did learn its name and its author.

Although I did not realise it, that casual happening set off a chain-reaction of impulses or events which were destined to have important consequences for me. The first one came very shortly afterwards when I was looking through the shelves of one of the second-hand bookshops which at that time thronged the Quays. I spotted a copy of the *True Devotion* and as sufficient curiosity had been awakened in me by the account I had so recently listened to I bought it for the sum of four old pence. It proved to be a find in another direction; it was the first English edition of the *True Devotion*, translated by Fr Faber and printed in Dublin. I still have it.

At once I proceeded to the reading of it. The result was a sort of crisis in me. I suppose that I would have regarded myself as having some devotion to Our Lady, but it certainly did not surpass the dimension of the sentimental. It was what we were taught in the Catechism of the day. Mary was included in a general section on the saints and we were told that it was 'lawful' to be devout

to her. In other words not a sin – a ludicrous description which would almost amount to placing it in the same category as backing horses or moderate drinking. With that grudging teaching it was remarkable that the popular attitude rose to what it did.

Put on a Shelf but not for Long

In my case I had not the degree of knowledge which would be necessary to absorb the True Devotion. Indeed it seemed to me to border on the absurd. But I did manage to persevere to the end. However, I had had enough. I put it on a shelf and I do not think that I would ever have opened it again. My reading had created a prejudice against it.

But that was where the chain effect came into play. Very shortly afterwards I made the acquaintance of Tom Fallon, a leading member of the St Vincent de Paul Society, a prominent civil servant, and altogether a remarkable personage. He died in Mexico some years ago at the age of about ninety-six. He had served there as a priest from the early 1920s, including the Obregon Persecution at its height.

A question which he very soon put to me was if I had read the True Devotion. My answer that I had, brought the further query: what did I think of it? Tom could be brusque in his manner and my reply that I had been unimpressed by the book brought down on me the suggestion that I had not read it with attention; that I had only skimmed thought it. The book was a supreme classic in its field, necessary knowledge and it was due to myself that I understand it.

So I took the True Devotion in hand again and went carefully through it. The result was the same as before.

There was an abyss between what it set forth and what I possessed. I so reported to Tom Fallon.

I now regard it as strange that he did not seek to interrogate me in regard to the defects, which bulked so big to me and which were not visible to him at all. How many times this performance was gone through of compelling a re-reading by me, I cannot precisely say. Let me put it at half a dozen times. No specific result seemed to emerge from each new reading, and yet each one appeared to have the quality of a step towards an objective. And that was exactly what things worked out to. I was engaged on the final forced reading when a sort of phenomenon accomplished itself. Without any process of thought leading up to it, something which I could but regard as a divine favour was granted to me. It was the sudden realisation that the book was true. But why should this be? I did not understand things any more than I had previously. But there it was: a complete conviction that what I had been regarding as exaggerated and unreal was fully justified.

It Was All True, How I Knew Not

That moment has remained in my mind what an absolute clarity. I have only to think of it and it stands before me in its original startling complexion. In that moment I *knew* that the book was true.

What effect had this upon me? Very roughly I would say that it was twofold. I saw that the fault was mainly in myself. I lacked a whole field of knowledge in regard to Our Lady which was necessary for the comprehending of her position as presented by the saint. I would have to face up to the fact that I really knew nothing about her. The second part of this thought was that De Montfort

was not writing for such as me but for a theologically educated class who possessed the foundation which the book required. He was presuming a knowledge of that foundation.

The point arises: Was Tom Fallon doing the same in regard to me? Was he making the mistake of supposing that I had the knowledge which would enable me to appreciate the book? And could that be the reason why at no stage did he probe or argue with me as to why I was not attuned to the book!

All these things thrashed around in my mind but finally settled into a peremptory conclusion. It was that I must get hold of the knowledge which De Montfort was presuming. In that stage things remained for a while. Not knowing exactly how to find what I wanted, I took no action.

But the action came. It imposed itself by virtue of that chain-reaction to which I have already referred. Perhaps it strikes a wrong note to say that it imposed itself on me. For when the transaction is analysed I had in a sense earned the succession of links. I had followed up each one as it had presented itself. I had bought the book merely on the strength of hearing someone commend it to a group. I had then read it attentively. It was not my fault that I failed to get its message. When the next set of links, which were Tom Fallon's interventions, asserted themselves I yielded meekly in a manner which was not exactly typical of me. At the end of that particular series of links, perhaps it could be said that I had qualified to receive yet another impulse.

Have I to point out that I was discovering for myself the procedure which the Legion calls Symbolic Action or the 39 Steps. In difficulties take a step in faith. This sets

in motion a succession of them until the crowning one arrives.

De Concilio Supplies the Answer

The next step was of a completely different type and in another field. As an act of helpfulness to a friend I paid my first visit to Mount Melleray. The next chain-reaction met me so to speak on the monastery doorstep. The Guest Master asked me if I would wish to have some book. 'A book,' I exclaimed, his question producing quite a shock in me. 'O yes, I do *particularly* want a book, I want one on the theology of the Blessed Virgin, one which is deep enough to give me the fullness of her position but at the same time simple enough for me to understand.' He promised me to look around in their library.

Soon after he came to me with a book, it was entitled *The Knowledge of Mary* and it was by Fr Joseph De Concilio. It contained three hundred pages and a first glance through them suggested that it was rather deep. I started off at once on it. I had not gone far before I was seized with the same sort of excitement which had come to me when the True Devotion had suddenly revealed itself to me. Because De Concilio was the very thing that I was looking for, it was exactly for me. It was completely comprehensible but it was likewise most complete in what it taught on its subject. It began to unfold to me the entrancing but true eminence of the woman on whom God had built his whole scheme from all eternity.

It was the perfect introduction to the True Devotion. Nothing better from my point of view could be conceived. As I went on, it filled every gap and met every difficulty which had troubled me. The light that it afforded was so suitable to me that I could not but look on the book

as rather a wondrous gift. As I have said, it was another emotional and intellectual experience for me.

A Sense of Desperation

But a great apprehension flooded into me. I saw this book as essential to me. I would be able to get through it during my stay in the monastery. But would I remember it? As it seemed to me, I could not afford to run the chance of being parted from it. I must be able to study it and perhaps learn it off by heart. The title page told me that the book was published by a New York firm called Barclay in 1878. This was ominous. Would I be able to secure a copy? Strange to say, the idea of asking the monastery for a loan of the book did not occur to me. I was unknown to the monks, and I felt that there would be some firm rule against lending books from their library to birds of passage like myself. I did not even think of asking.

I had recourse to a counsel of desperation. I began to copy out practically its entire contents. At this I worked late and long. As I was also rising very early for the first Masses, this copying task was an immense burden, but it was peremptory. I did not dare to risk being deprived of that treasure of knowledge. However, the exhaustion of the performance was repaid by the fact that it helped to fix indelibly in my memory all the wonderful material that it offered. As a total transaction I have assigned in my Marian philosophy an equal rating to those two books, *De Montfort* and *De Concilio*. It took the second one to open the first to me, so that I have always thought of them as interdependent halves in this teaching operation which turned my life upside down.

I am not contending that the study of a book like *De Concilio* is now a necessary preliminary to the proper

understanding of the True Devotion. I see very many persons around me take up the latter and read it with apparently a full appreciation. But this always puzzles me because not all of them have what I have been calling the foundation. Yet they eagerly receive the illuminated picture which St Louis-Marie projects of Mary and they give it full play in their lives. I have to confess that I do not understand how this operates.

The Legion Handbook Supplies the Doctrinal Basis

For legionaries this whole problem hardly arises. The handbook gives them the foundation in a simple form. Mary walks through its pages from the first to the last. The place assigned by God to her is adequately covered. In fact the handbook can be regarded as a simplified but all the same elevated summary of such a book as *De Concilio*. Effort is made to include every phase of her being and to link it to aspects of the legionary apostolate so that they explain each other, and in such fashion that Mary becomes the motive for each item of the apostolate. This is achieved so sufficiently as to produce in the ordinary body of the legionaries a limitless generosity and a veritable heroism. What I hesitantly describe as the more select half of the Legion are certainly giving themselves in a princely manner. There would appear to be nothing of which they are not capable. One is tempted to apply widely to the Legion the valuation given to the Chinese legionaries by Cardinal Riberi, namely that their stature is that of the first Christians, nothing less.

Actually the doctrine and fire of the True Devotion is so blended into the Legion handbook that even if the True Devotion were not being mentioned, it would still amount to much the same thing. It is an interesting

circumstance that persons who reject the True Devotion are found accepting the handbook without the slightest demur. They recoil from the De Montfort Consecration but they recite with readiness the Legion Promise which is just as wholesale as the Consecration.

The 'True Devotion' Sets Doctrine Alight

In these circumstances the Legion could no doubt get along without the True Devotion, and of course in many places it has to do so by reason of its being unavailable in the particular languages. But this is due to the amount that the Legion has already sucked into its bloodstream from the True Devotion. This is a continuing process. Much more remains to be assimilated? The fact is that one cannot emphasise too much the value of the True Devotion as a supplement to the handbook and the entire Legion system. St Louis-Marie's words of fire uplift Our Lady from the level of pure doctrine and give her substance as a person, Our Mother with intimate charge of our lives, utterly indispensable to us, our Queen, our leader, the very thought of whom inspires courage and stimulates one to undertake the impossible.

Apart altogether from the special relation which the True Devotion would have towards the Legion, the book should be read for its uniqueness. Among the works written on the Blessed Virgin there is no other even remotely like it. One cannot name another and say: this is second! It just stands out like a pillar on a hill.

Such being the Legion's valuation of the book, it would form a disastrous position if many legionaries are not giving it a proper place in their lives, because the loss to themselves is thereby great.

Defending Our Lady's Position

Furthermore it must not be thought that the cause of Our Lady is now so firm as to need no defenders. The opposite is the case, a most strange position having produced itself as the result of Vatican II. That body proposed as one of its principal aims to elevate common Mariological teaching to the point which the operations of the Legion had shown to be within the reach of the ordinary people. To that end it composed Chapter VIII of the *De Ecclesia* decree which brought things up to the level which the Legion had been teaching its members, while at the same time not exceeding that level. This is intriguing as indicating that the council considered that the Legion afforded a norm as to what the ordinary rank and file of the Church as capable of receiving.

Nevertheless the unexpected sequel followed of a setback in regard to Marian Devotion. This is peculiar in view of the advanced teaching of Chapter VIII. It can only be explained by the fact that the council had decided to substitute for a separate decree on the subject of Our Lady a chapter in the Decree on the Church. A specious deduction would be that a chapter is less than a decree. Also one has to be more reserved in a general decree in order to maintain due proportion. But the gain from being so emphatically set out as part of essential Church doctrine far outweighs the loss of separateness. Of course time will soon redress the balance. In the meantime the presence of the Legion in the field has assumed an added importance. It is the special custodian and propagator among the people of the correct role of Our Lady. For this reason the Legion must give special heed and prominence to the True Devotion as a sovereign means of maintaining its own spirit.

Total Consecration or 'Slavery'

So far I have been speaking in general terms of the True Devotion, more of its quality as a proclamation about Mary than as a special devotion to her. But the book declares its purpose to be the establishment of a system of devotion to her. It calls this the slavery or total consecration to Our Lady. It is an anomaly that thereby the book places certain difficulties in its own way. Many persons are alienated from the devotion and consecration by practices which the saint recommends and for this reason turn away from the book itself.

This is unfortunate for every reason. A particular reason is that the essential of his devotion does not consist in the things which those people recoil from but in its abiding spirit of unity and dependence on Our Lady.

The word 'slavery' evokes among some an irrational antipathy as if we were obliged to adopt the mentality of an earthly slavery. Also De Montfort's prescribing of the wearing of a chain to keep us in mind of our subjection to Our Lady stirs up dislike. I point out that if this attitude of sheer sentimentality were allowed to run away with things, it could tell with equivalent force against our use of the Crucifix. Why do not those objectors rail against it as introducing into our minds a disgraceful and out-of-date barbarism associated with vile criminals and their dire punishment? But it is for that very reason that we are devoted to the Crucifix; it makes vivid to us what Jesus took on himself for our sake.

I repeat that the chains and penitential practices proposed by St Louis-Marie are not essential to his devotion. But certainly they cannot be ruled out as aids towards the acquiring of the central idea which is that of a realisation of our total dependence on Mary, Our

Mother. God himself has placed us in that condition and it extends to extremes far beyond our capacity to measure them. Slavery may seem to be a deprived state, but as the handbook points out, it leaves the mind and soul free, and is little in comparison with the extremity of union, dependence and love which we should endeavour to cultivate in ourselves towards our exquisite Queen and Mother. This is due from us as part of our ordinary Catholic state and not because St Louis Marie de Montfort enjoins it. His position is that of reminding us that it is due from us, rather than of imposing it on us.

In that same sense that it is the inner spirit of the devotion that counts more than the practices which are entailed, the very form of Consecration recommended by the True Devotion could be left out. But this would be going too far in the opposite direction and would risk in the end our slipping out of the devotion altogether. We are composed of body and spirit, and each lives out of the other. Therefore the True Devotion for reality and permanence must possess some bodily or tangible form.

Legion Tries To Repay Its Debt to De Montfort

As to the taking on of the devotion in some practical way, I could not speak too strongly. In the first place I have seen the Legion itself arise at the mere touch of De Montfort on an interested group. At once that band expanded into the Legion. Of course he must have been keeping a sort of vigil, awaiting that moment ever since he prophesied it more than two hundred years previously. 'I look forward,' he says, 'to a great legion of brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary, of both sexes, to combat the world, the devil and corrupted nature in those more than ever perilous times which are to come.'

But the union between the Legion and the saint went further than his breathing of life into it. He would have to continue to nurture it, and the Legion should be necessity admit its obligation to him. In a strange and potent fashion the Legion was enabled to do this. Though he had died in 1716 in the odour of sanctity, his Cause for Canonisation lagged on the way and seemed to come to a standstill with his Beatification by Leo XIII. But the spread of the Legion out over the world made him one of the most invoked saints in the Church and supplied what had been the missing element, the popular estimation or cultus. And at once Rome acted. Not only was he canonised in 1947 but his statue was placed in a lordly position in St Peter's, prominent amongst the greatest ones.

On How to Read It

Now may I put the question: what is the best way to read his book and to practice his devotion, for these operations must go together as a twin? I would be inclined to say that the very best method would lie in the reading of a page of the True Devotion every day, but in the manner of a prayer or meditation, seeking to drain the idea and spirit even of each word into our minds, accepting what it declares as a message to us from him; rejecting the notion that the very strong expressions which all the time proceed from his lips about the Blessed Virgin, represent in the slightest degree unjustified embellishment of her. For there I think is the very charm and virtue of the book: that it can appear so often to be parting company from reality and plunging into a fantastic, extravagant world of its own. But beware when you find yourself imagining that such is the case, because there is no exaggeration and no fantasy. No book ever passed through such an

ordeal by fire and emerged so triumphantly as this one has.

Moreover Mary's vastness exceeds our capacity to exaggerate her. Our intelligence really cannot compass her. Necessarily God's masterpiece evades our full understanding so that when luminous glimpses are afforded to us we find the light too much.

So again I urge it. Read the book regularly in the spirit of complete acceptance. Dwell on its different parts. Capture its soaring ideas and receive them into yourself as by very faith. In this way will the real Mary show herself to you and be able to exert her full maternal sway over you. Thus will you make your passage through this life worthwhile, what it is supposed to be.

Alfie I

Strange to say, I think that formal talk about Alfie Lamb has been the subject of conversation. I knew him he remains a vivid memory. He has been mentioned without cause.

Just now he comes up in connection with the late Cardinal Ruffini. His Eminence Cardinal Ruffini, Apostolic Nuncio to Argentina, his envoyship there, revisited his astonishment that the Cardinal had been introduced there. It is a fact that he himself strongly on this point. He is to possess the quality which is the mark of a great man.

After his distinguished service as Archbishop of Mozzoni returned to Rome, he was elevated to the Cardinal rank. His membership of many of the congregations which handle the affairs of the Holy See, the congregation which has the charge of the Holy Office, would add weight to his recommendations.

Lambe

I have never before given a e. Frequently of course he has tion among us; to those who d image. Never has his name ising profound ripples.

a new setting. A little while Umberto Mozzoni, who was ia at the time of Alfie Lambe's that country and declared ause of Alfie Lambe had not nderstood that he expressed t, insisting that Alfie appeared would justify that step.

career as Papal Nuncio, rned to Rome where he alate and appointed to the he Supreme Congregations the Church. One of these is charge of canonisations. This ommendations.

Over and above that, His Eminence was personally acquainted with Alfie, saw him at work and had many interviews with him and discussed him with the nuncios and ecclesiastical authorities of all the other South American countries in which Alfie worked. Furthermore it was he who gave the envoy the final blessing as he was about to die.

His Eminence's expression of astonishment that Alfie's cause had not been introduced has apparently been effective. The Legion has been stirred into activity and a committee has been formed to promote the matter. Just now Maria Sofia del Prado, who has been appointed to the presidency of that body, has visited Dublin to acquaint us with these happenings and to ask for the co-operation of Concilium. When she left here, it was to proceed to Rome in order to discuss the matter with Cardinal Mozzoni.

I make the following observations. There is no element of surprise to us here in the proposition of the cardinal. We have always believed that Alfie died in the odour of sanctity and that every place he visited had registered the same judgement about him. We took it as a matter of course that something would be done about it. Actually the moment he died a prayer for his elevation was produced bearing the approbation of Cardinal de la Torre, Archbishop of Quito, Ecuador.

It might be expected that the Concilium would have observed that time was slipping by without formal action being taken and would institute inquiries. But life in the Concilium is lived at a hectic pace. It was presumed that the matter was moving at the deliberate rate appropriate to its importance. So it is with a sense of shock that we are brought to realise that everyone has been waiting on everybody else and that nothing tangible has been done.

It is to be hoped that now we have been wakened up, we will grant very wholeheartedly that co-operation which Maria Prado has requested. It is due from us because we are the main custodians of Alfie's name. Not of us must it be cynically said that men's memories are not a monument.

The progress of the Cause of Edel Quinn has caused her to live vividly on. We owe to Alfie that continuance of life. So we must now do what lies in our power to bring him to notice. We must pray, and we must make him known in such ways as we can. How can people be interested in him except that they know something about him?

The Firtel Biography

An effective way of doing this is to introduce people to the biography of him written by Hilda Firtel, which is a jewel. Hilda was our former envoy to Germany, going there immediately after the war and spreading the Legion over the country. Her own life has been one of rare accomplishment.

Naturally I have just been stimulated to take up that Life and go through it again. I rise up with a renewed appreciation of the subject and of the admirable way in which the author treats it. When you have read it, you will know why Alfie was able to stir hearts as he did, and to cover South America with the legionary army, and incidentally to win such veneration. I leave to the book the task of telling the story of Alfie Lambe.

Following the Call

The first time I saw Alfie, he was only one in a crowd. I did not meet him. He was a novice in the Christian

Brothers house at Marino, North Dublin, and I was giving an address on the Legion. Later he told me it was that talk which awakened his interest in it.

Sometime after that came the trouble about his health. So highly did his authorities think of him, that for a while they played with the idea of departing with the doctor's advice and keeping him. They did not know how near they were to interfering with his true vocation!

To him the severance of his connection with the Christian Brothers seemed an irremediable disaster. He declared that it nearly broke his heart, but he adds that the Legion, which he joined soon afterwards in his own town, provided him with true consolation.

Consider moreover the strangeness of the after-event. When Alfie died, it was the door of the then empty tomb of the Christian Brothers in Buenos Aires that opened to receive him. The Superior had been one of his fellow-novices in Marino. Surely this is more than a striking coincidence? Our sweet Lord recognised how much the Brothers had done for Alfie and in the end handed him back to them.

But that is far ahead. Let us return to the deeply shocked boy who had just had his great ambition wrecked. He did not permit himself to remain long in that condition. He came into the Legion and it represented at least a substitute for what he had lost. But as the whole situation was a providential one, it continued to unfold itself.

The big firm in which Alfie had found employment closed down unexpectedly. If one had been on the alert in regard to Alfie's development, one could have guessed what would happen. The legionary attraction was already strongly asserting itself. He did not seek employment locally, but came to Dublin and entered the Morning Star

hostel as an indoor brother. This meant full-time apostolic work of the most difficult type.

Further horizons soon presented themselves to him. He engaged in efforts to extend the Legion on the countryside of Ireland. In all of these occupations he showed himself to be first-class, and he had those around him wondering as to what was coming next.

Latin America Calls

And then the bell of destiny sounded for him. It had been decided to send Brother Grace as envoy to Colombia and Venezuela. This announcement electrified Alfie. It crystalized all his yearnings, until then hardly understood by himself. That was what he was craving for – something really big, a going somewhere into the unknown to look for souls, and prepared to pay any price for them.

Make no mistake about it. It was the idea of utter giving of himself that allured Alfie. Why should it be supposed that he was of lesser metal than the countless Irish monks of the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* who plunged into the wilds of Europe, most of them never to be heard of again? Why should his dream be less than theirs, or his vision meaner than theirs, for they were his models?

Neither would it be right for us to imagine that his thoughts were weaker ones than Edel Quin's. You will recall her remark at the celebrated Concilium Meeting which commissioned her as envoy. The great Dr Elias Magennis, who knew intimately the area in Africa to which she was being assigned, had pointed out its dangers and difficulties which he declared were going to prove too much for her. Only the very strongest of men, he said, could stand up to solitary wandering in such conditions. You know her reply: 'I do not want to be sent off on any

picnic.' Those elements of danger and hardship were no deterrent; they were part of the attraction. Have no doubt on this point. Neither did Alfie ambition a picnic. Indomitable spirit drove Edel on for eight years and Alfie for six, and in each case a continent received a deluge of grace.

Edel died in 1944; that is nine years before Alfie became envoy. It would be unquestionable that her example exercised a peremptory influence over him

Perhaps I have dallied unduly over this aspect of heroism in the cause of religion. But as the note of canonisation has been sounded in respect of Alfie, it is necessary to emphasise that aspect.

Brothers Grace and Lambe were commissioned at the April 1953 meeting of Concilium and at once started their preparations. On 16 July they set out by plane, spending a week in New York and then going on to Bogota, the capital of Colombia. Waiting for them at the airport was the gallant figure of Joaquina Lucas who had been envying in South America since 1946. She had already made almost a complete round of the continent. She came to Bogota in the hope of helping the newcomers. Alfie worked along with her and she was his chief Spanish teacher. His progress in the language was remarkable. By the end of the year he was fit to stand alone. Then at once the bell of destiny rang.

Ecuador Opened Up

Ambato was a diocese in Ecuador; its head was Bishop Echeverria, a Franciscan. The diocese was described as in a deplorable condition, marked by indifference, ignorance and constant leakage. The bishop had summoned a meeting of his priests to consider this serious position.

One of those present described a recent experience with the Legion which had impressed him. This moved the assembly with the result that all present bound themselves by a promise to make trial of the Legion.

At once the bishop wrote to the Concilium describing the situation and making the urgent request that an envoy be sent to show them how to begin. This was not a little overwhelming, for just then the Concilium was discussing the question as to where Alfie would first be sent. Many were the places which required him. Bishop Echeverria's letter was the pointing finger. Incidentally, Ambato was just over the nearest frontier. The bishop must have thought we kept a supply of ready-to-go envoys, because our reply notified him that Alfie was already on his way. Their meeting was a joyful one and Alfie justified the bishop's hopes by starting two praesidia at once and preparing the way for many others.

So impressed was the bishop that he brought Alfie to the meeting of the whole hierarchy held at Quito under the presidency of Cardinal De la Torre. Alfie was invited to address the august body which responded by accepting the Legion for Ecuador.

There followed something which was to prove typical of Alfie. He appealed to the new legionaries for generous giving in order to avail of the many opportunities. The raw material reacted worthily and a sensational campaign of spreading the Legion throughout the whole country was put in motion. The resulting praesidia were of every type from prisoners, lepers and illiterates to the upper sections of the population. The work had all the air of solidity and soon Ecuador was covered with a net of branches. This was watched from over the surrounding frontiers and soon Alfie was besieged by urgent invitations to come to other

South American countries. With mixed feelings his own bishop agreed, but Cardinal De la Torre insisted on first bringing him to the International Eucharistic Congress in Rio de Janeiro so that he would recommend him to the innumerable bishops whom the Congress would bring together. This shows the extraordinary impression which Alfie and his work had already created in Ecuador.

The fact is of course that he was being made the output-point of heavenly forces. He, who had been adjudged to be insufficiently strong for a religious order in his own temperate climate, is giving a display of energy which is overwhelming to look at. On the same plane is his capacity to persuade and organise. Most important of all, everyone he encounters is immediately convinced that there is a radiation of holiness from him. There is an instinctive readiness to do what he wants. In every sort of difficulty, including spells of complete exhaustion, he remains imperturbable and charming.

The Key to a Continent

This radiation of force had not been anticipated by the Concilium. Good they had estimated him to be, but not to that invincible quality. It did not require length of time to realise its phenomenal character and then to sum it up in a phrase: 'Alfie is the key to the continent.' Not taking too seriously such physical weaknesses as were showing themselves, the Concilium followed in sheer delight the spread of the Legion there. Especially impressive was the fact that Alfie was well aware of the immense things which were taking place. Repeatedly he speaks of their supernatural quality. But apparently he had not the slightest temptation to ascribe anything to his own action. Modesty shone out of him.

At Rio de Janeiro amid the grandeurs of the Congress he had the pleasure of meeting three other envoys, the redoubtable Joaquina Lucas once again; Maria Diepen from Holland who had just arrived to work up the Legion in the Guyanas and the Dutch Antilles; and Mary Clerkin who was to divide up the gigantic Brazil with Joaquina.

During the Congress the four envoys had innumerable opportunities of contacts with the nuncios and members of the world's hierarchies, but a heavy price had to be paid in the way of pressure. Joaquina complained to the Concilium that the others were killing themselves. Bishop Echeverria was conspicuous in his efforts to introduce them to everybody.

Alfie was so moved by the possibilities which he saw in Brazil that he made up his mind to stay on there for the present. He was finding that his progress in Portuguese was rapid and it is to be remembered that Brazil is the size of Europe. But a letter arrived from the Concilium asking that he go to Argentina.

In view of what he had already decided in regard to the necessities in Brazil, this must have been a shock. There was the further consideration, which must have weighed heavily with him, that Argentina might mean the prolonged immobilising of him, because it had already refused every appeal to admit the Legion. Would his assignment to that country mean that he would spend perhaps years knocking fruitlessly at doors when in the other countries every hour would be turned to profit.

However, the Concilium had been pondering the problem too. From their central position they saw all the angles of it. Particularly they saw it in the light of that judgement which they had already formed in regard to

Alfie, namely that he was the key to the continent; that he had only to be sent to a place and its doors would open.

To Argentina without a Demur

It was of course the expectation that Alfie would go without demur, and that is what he did. In the late autumn of 1955 he landed in Buenos Aires where only a few specialised praesidia had been permitted. He waited on the nuncio from whom he received welcome and appreciation. But the decision of the great Archdiocese of Buenos Aires still remained unfavourable, so he turned his steps elsewhere.

In the Diocese of Salta and Catamarca small Legion foundations existed. He travelled there and vivid life and growth entered at his touch. Then began his monumental round of the bishops of the entire country, involving journeying on a vast scale. He proved indeed to be the key. In turn each bishop saw his power and granted his request. In one year he had seen many of them and praesidia were rising up throughout the land.

In the midst of these labours, events almost obliged him to go to Bolivia and Paraguay and there to get the Legion going extensively. For periods he had the company of Oonagh Twomey, the newly-appointed envoy to Bolivia. He had suggested that she be sent to him for her initial training. Also he went back to Ecuador for five months, finding that things had greatly prospered. The praesidia numbered four hundred with many efficient Curiae, and he renewed acquaintance with all his old friends.

Then back to Argentina where many bishops wanted him urgently. What a change from a few years before when that seemed to be the shut-off country! But still Buenos Aires, the capital, maintained its attitude of exclusion, greatly to the woe of Alfie. But suddenly that

situation reversed itself. Rome divided into five that huge, unwieldy diocese of four million people. Immediately the doors of four of them opened to the Legion, and not long afterwards the fifth diocese gave the long-deferred permission. That was on 9 December 1957. 'Even still I can hardly believe it,' said Alfie in his report to the Concilium.

Now Buenos Aires is a hub of legionary industry. It has a Senatus and thirty Councils functioning in its area. In the whole of the million square miles of Argentina, are now two thousand praesidia under the rule of three Senatus and a Regia.

Strange Attraction of Russia

In her book Miss Firtel gives a chapter to the strange fascination which Russia began to exercise over Alfie. He contemplated, though in an infinite way, the completion of his work in South America. He saw clearly that the Legion was a firm growth and that envoyship was a passing phase. There is no doubt that he had some circumstances in his mind which would mean that he would move on elsewhere, and likewise, that it would be a Legion assignment. For he had a total and growing conviction in regard to the Legion.

It was of course on Russia that his mind was dwelling. He spoke of going there as envoy. He worked at the language and would of course have mastered it. He set on foot a translation of the handbook into Russian, mixed with Russians in Buenos Aires, and as part of this he succeeded in getting a praesidium established among the Orthodox there. This was by a singular privilege granted to the Legion by the Vatican.

He touched on this subject in his correspondence and eventually asked permission to pay a tourist visit to

Russia. This was denied to him for reason which seemed to be good, i.e. that it would be costly without exhibiting a rational hope of securing any benefit, and that it might prove a dangerous distraction to him. Of course what Alfie had in mind was some miraculous help during that trip; he had come to regard such things as part and parcel of his envoyship.

It must not be thought that he was just 'shot down' in this matter. Quite the contrary. At home every word he spoke was taken with supreme seriousness and discussed with him. In the background there would be little doubt that he would be appointed as envoy to Russia whenever it would be deemed possible to send such a one. Obviously too this would depend on his mission to South America being sufficiently discharged. Alfie had already superabundantly proved himself to be adequate to any legionary enterprise.

In the final issue, as we sadly know, it was not God's will that Alfie should enter Russia. But neither should we think that all those yearnings and preparations of his were wasted. Far from it! Legionary outlook would oblige that we discern in that orientation of Alfie's mind a positive pointing of grace, a sort of twilight to an actual operation. In the practical order it would gain in the keeping of the problem in our minds. It is further testimony to Alfie's saintly quality that he did not allow our refusal to weigh on him even as a disappointment.

At this point I make a jump ahead of some years. Many minds had likewise been thinking about Russia and in the year 1969 it was felt that a symbolic gesture should be made. This took the shape of a Peregrinatio party to that country. It worked out to a success which could never have been anticipated and now those expeditions

to Russia are an annual and wonderful event. None of us would doubt that Alfie's yearnings and preparations formed a contributory part of that development.

The Thief in the Night

He had been suffering to a considerable extent from stomach trouble. But we did not take this too seriously. Alfie was a darling child of Jesus and Mary. Such souls have their own set of rules; they go on when others cannot. A doctor shakes his head over them and yet they live on in impossible conditions, fulfilling missions, putting forth efforts outside the powers of the strongest.

Of course we pleaded with Alfie, as we had done with Edel, to moderate, but they just went on being superhuman. It was not that they were disobedient, such was not in them. It was just that they saw things from a different angle. They judged that they were operating within their strength and that Mary their Mother was beckoning them on.

It is probable that Alfie did not even take our admonitions seriously. We did not insist because we did not view his condition as really grave. We ascribed it to everything except the awful thing that it really was.

Like a thunderbolt came the end. In December 1958 the Archbishop of Cordoba gave sanctions for the starting of the Legion there and Alfie proceeded to that important centre. After setting up five praesidia he was seized by extreme illness and taken to hospital. The x-ray showed him to be a subject for operation. He was out on a plane to Buenos Aires and lodged in the Blue Nuns Hospital. The operation demonstrated that he was full of cancer, beyond the power of surgery to ameliorate.

Alfie was going to die very soon.

The archbishop himself, Cardinal Copello – who had kept out of the Legion for a long time, came to administer the Last Sacraments. The nuncio, who had always been a pillar of consolation for the envoy, gave him the last blessing. It was from that noble soul, Mr T.J. Horan the Irish Ambassador, that we heard the first news of this crushing development. Two of us at once drove down to Tullamore to tell his mother. An elder brother of his opened the door. Standing with him as if expecting us was his mother. Though knowing nothing, she thought that Alfie was dead. She was in the grip of premonition. The newspapers of that morning had reported the crash of a plane flying from Cordoba to Buenos Aires and incredibly she concluded that Alfie had perished in it, so that our news that he was still alive was momentarily a relief.

El Corderito

It was on 21 January 1958 that he died, the feast of St Agnes, befitting the purity which was a feature of him. On that day every year the Holy Father is presented with two lambs in Rome. It has been pointed out that the Legion gave the Eternal Father a Lamb on that 21 January, the reference being to the term *cordero* or *corderito* (meaning a lamb) by which Alfie was everywhere affectionately known.

Do I think that Alfie is canonisable? Yes, I do. I could not see any defect in him. That by itself could be a negative state. In him it was supplemented with a faith without limit, and other heroic qualities. He gave all his energies to the pursuit of souls. He had Our Blessed Lady in a perfect perspective. One may institute a parallel between him and Edel Quinn. Each was wise, charming, lovable

and without kinks. Each represented a frustrated vocation converted into a supreme triumph. In her case it was accomplished in eight years and in his case in six. She is being acclaimed as a model for modern youth. He would fulfil the same role and in a particular way for male youth.

Two days after Alfie's funeral, Noel Lynch arrived on the scene, sent to assist him but in fact to take his place. He was aged twenty-two and without any Spanish. Elisa Fox, who had provided lodgings for Alfie when he was in Buenos Aires, exclaimed indignantly that it was a shame to send a boy on a man's errand. We did not hesitate to write to her. 'Wait and see.' She waited and saw that the six foot boy was every inch of him a man. He nobly reaped where Alfie had sown and did his own fine job in the vineyard.

Earlier I have mentioned the distinguished personage, Cardinal Mozzoni who was nuncio in Argentina during Alfie's days there and who helped him so much. The cardinal has just written a most important letter to Srta Maria Sofia Prado, the president of the group in Buenos Aires, which has presented a petition to the archbishop there for the constitution of a tribunal to examine into the sanctity of Alfonso Lambe. The cardinal's letter is by way of a testimonial on favour of the petition. It is a significant item and I give you the pleasure of hearing it.

A Princely Tribute

My Good Lady,

First of all let me thank you for your Easter greetings and I reciprocate them though tardily. But as the Ascension of today completes the Easter season with the glorious Ascension of

Jesus to Heaven, my prayer for you is that he will always raise you to the heights and liberty of spirit and serenity of heart. I wish to tell you now that I know nothing of the Cause of Edel Quinn. I heard some legionaries in Lourdes speak in very high praise of her virtues and her heroic dedication to the Africans. I believe that what Edel was for the Africans, our Alfonso was – perhaps a little less – for Latin America. At twenty years of age he left Dublin and at twenty six, when he died in Buenos Aires, he had laid down firm foundations of the Legion in almost all of the Southern hemisphere, in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. I have witnessed with admiration his apostolate in Argentina and Bolivia. The author Hilda Firtel defined him thus: ‘A giant of the apostolate’ and he was. Alone and without knowing the language and poor, he faced men and women, youths and adults in the name of Mary. For example in Bolivia he lived many days in Oruro among the miners, all of them Indians. It takes a lot to try and imagine what Oruro was then and still is. Oruro is 360 kilometres from La Paz and the spirit of violence predominated there. Well, our Alfonso succeeded in founding the Legion in Oruro itself. When I heard that, I said to myself: ‘This youth works miracles’.

In Argentina I had to guide him and apply the brakes a little to his anxiety for foundation and conquest. Physically he seemed to me a little less than tall, delicate and with the infirmity which was consuming his whole being and which he attributed to the climate. His character was strong

and at the same time very sweet; temperamental and ready as few are for any sacrifice. His vocation was the Legion, and I think that, once well directed, he would have dedicated his whole life to Mary in the priestly service of her son, Jesus.

The love of God was reflected constantly in the love of his neighbour and of the sick whom he visited and cured spiritually and attended to, and whom he incited the legionaries to serve. Those were heroic days of the Legion, lived in humility and total dedication to the Legion ideal: to live the Legion! The apostolate became an absolute obligation. Alfonso is a star, one of those which in full summer in the limpid clear nights rapidly cross skies leaving a trail of light and disappearing, and that light remains to the eyes of all Argentinians.

As a tribute to Alfonso that document reaches topmost heights. And likewise how it touches hearts!

The Nun's Role in the Mystical Body

I am going to talk to the Sisters gathered at the conference in an optimistic way on the fantastic subject of the converting of the world and of their relation to it. This seems to involve a contradiction. For how can one be optimistic if the prospect is hopeless? But you will see.

Years ago I wrote an article entitled 'The Mystical Body must Function as a Whole'. The analogy with the human body is an accurate one. For the perfect working of both, all the parts must combine harmoniously. To the extent that this is not the case the output is lessened, the ideal is not achieved.

This applies to the extreme extent in the Mystical Body where a principle purpose is the perfect functioning of each part for its own sake. That is, the sanctification of the individual soul is the primary divine purpose, the entire output of the entire body being perhaps the secondary one.

In that inspection of mine I took the broad categories of the hierarchy, the clergy and the laity, and I laboured

the obvious, namely that no one by itself constitutes the Mystical Body, or can substitute for the whole. The co-operation of the three is essential. If all unite in an effort, the full power of the Lord is enabled to issue so that no limits can be imposed on what may follow. Things exceeding nature must be expected, impossibilities will be surmounted.

Surely that formula of united action is easily conformed to? But no. The terms are not so often fulfilled. A hierarchy may be on fire but the priests less so, and the laity may be left out altogether. Seldom enough, is the threefold combination found. Most campaigns for souls are flawed in that way so that the mighty and the miraculous do not proceed.

Moreover, something additional has to be specified as a vital ingredient, namely the presence of Our Lady who is the heart of the Mystical Body. If her proper place is denied to her for any reason, the harmony of the Mystical Body is violated. The Holy Spirit will not preside over the enterprise, for he only works in union with her. Later, I will touch on some instances in history where I regard that unity of the Mystical Body to have been forthcoming with the result that solutions emerged which could only be regarded as divine.

Repairing an Omission in My Formula for Conquest

The holding of last years' kindred event to this one, cast a sort of bomb into the threefold division of the Mystical Body on which I was basing my formula of conquest. I have had to ask myself: where do the nuns and the religious brothers enter in? I did not include them specifically but of course I should have. Decidedly they are of too distinctive and noble a character, vastly too

important, and more numerous than the clergy. Therefore they cannot be passed over, nor can it be assumed that they are comprised in one of the other three categories. You are not cleric and you are not the laity.

Perhaps it may be said: 'What does their classification matter? Those classes are in the Mystical Body and is that not sufficient?' I reply that for the purpose of my contention it matters in the highest degree. I have been suggesting conditions in which the full power of the Mystical Body is likely to manifest itself. I have based this on the active participation of the three main sections of the Church. If in fact a fourth section should be included, it would gravely impair my argument. Because the mobilising of the Mystical Body is a visible transaction and one must be able to see who is included. If by not seeing we fail to mobilise an essential class, then that formula of conquest is not conformed to; the Mystical Body is not functioning as a whole.

Apart from the principle at stake, there is a vital psychology which will assert itself. If you, that is the nuns, do not know that you belong to that ultimate category of responsibility in the Church, you will not feel any sense of duty in regard to it. And is not this, what is happening? No one is in practice crediting you with any responsibility for organising the lay apostolate or even taking an active part in a direct campaign to souls for the purpose of evangelising them and converting them.

The Nun's Role in the Approach to Souls is to organise and Direct

Up to the times of Pius X and Pius XI the laity was not instructed as to their apostolic duty and hence they did not assume it. Would not the same apply to you? Actually

I would fear that not knowing the fullness of your position, you do not aim at it. If it is difficult to achieve a clearly seen vocation, what chance is there of fulfilling a misunderstood one?

The retort will of course be forthcoming that you have your own particular apostolate, assigned by your congregations, such as teaching and nursing in the main. But then lay teachers and nurses are not regarded as fulfilling their apostolic obligation by those professional duties. There is moreover, the practical problem that frequently those particular duties can absorb one to the extent of excluding the thought of the soul. It certainly does it in the case of many lay teachers and nurses. To what extent does the religious state counteract that tendency? Not altogether, judging by the appearance in at least a proportion of the consecrated ones. But even if this were not actually the case, it would not mean that the nuns and brothers were playing a sufficient part in the apostolate to which I am here giving the meaning of, the direct search for souls.

Your correct place in the apostolate should rise high above the rank and file one; you should be organisers and directors. But emphatically you do not even in thought promote yourselves into that role. Regard this closely. Is it not a sheer anomaly in view of your quite special and leading position in the Church? It is almost unthinkable that such a section in the Mystical Body should not be active to its full extent in discharging the function expected from it by the Head. Or to put it in a different way, you are not imitating the Blessed Virgin to the ultimate extent in her mothering of souls. Some sentences in the Legion handbook would have their complete application here: 'Each part of the Mystical Body has its own special

purpose and work. Some parts are noble and others less so; but all are dependent one upon the other, and the same life animates them all. All are put to loss by the failure of one as all profit by the excellence of one' (handbook, page 140).

If therefore such a distinctive section of the Mystical Body is falling short of its intended role, then the whole Mystical Body is being thereby put to loss. The current announcement that Rome is drawing up a new Chapter for Nuns is proof that the Church considers that there is some degree of failure.

Shameful Abandonment of Evangelisation in Favour of Social Work

Has the remedying of the world's inequalities and the attainment of an ideal social order become the premier goal, pushing into a negligible place the old one of seeking first the Kingdom of God and his justice – to which is appended the promise that then all the secondary things shall be added in?

This fanatical absorption in the temporal to the detriment of the first things, seems to carry with it the presumption that the purpose specified by Our Lord on Mount Olivet as the main one, is making satisfactory progress; that is the gathering of all into the Church. Whereas the contrary is so much the case; that one could imagine that the Ascension Commandment had been cancelled. For unless a radical change sets in, the hope of converting the world has become purely chimerical. We are not gaining on the world. It is gaining on us at a rate of one per cent per annum. As the present proportion of Catholics in the world's population is about 16%, we would be reduced to about 5% by the end of this century without any suggestion that then an

improvement would set in. Humanly speaking this would promise extinction. Is it human despair that has produced the new method; that is the switch over to social science and liberation as the way to evangelisation?

It is certainly not as if conversion has shown itself to be impossible. Because in whole countries – one can dare to say everywhere in the world – the attempt to convert has not been made. Souls have not even been approached as ordered by the Lord. Those of you who have been away on the *Peregrinatio* know how easy it is to approach them. The reason for standing off from them would seem to be that Catholics are very much of the belief that one religion is as good as another. For everywhere the attempt is genuinely made, it meets with success.

Take up a single issue of *Maria Legionis* and it will be seen that this is true, and the realisation is driving us on to frantic efforts. For the reasoning seems to emerge that the world is convertible if a sufficiency of effort is put forth; and further that such a sufficiency is realisable.

The Legion's Proficiency in Conversion

But a further thought is the exciting one that at the present time the Legion is the main ingredient in the flow of conversions. The outlook in many places is actually hopeful, such as India, Ceylon [Sri Lanka], and many countries in the populous Far East, and in the Continent of Africa. Souls are being brought to practice at a great rate in other places, notably in South America.

A fact of supreme importance is beginning to appear, namely that Islam is not in reality the unconvertible and even unapproachable force which it has been universally assumed to be. Considering that it is claiming to possess as many members as the Church and to be growing rapidly, it

represents a tactical gain of immensity that the Legion of Mary has been able to make successful approach to them in every place where they exist. In India and Africa a fair number of converts have been secured. Our PPC teams have shown that there is little difficulty in establishing friendly contact on the basis of religious discussion.

Turning the Tide: Dramatic Instances

As the Legion itself grows in numbers and as other sections waken up to the possibilities and join in, all this will gain such acceleration as to reverse definitely that diminishing Catholic proportion.

Admittedly the mere reversal of that melancholy decline, though a triumph, would still leave the conversion of the world in a realm of astronomical years. But we have not to reconcile ourselves to that. I have a theory which I think is borne out by very many events in history. It is that if the Church labours heroically and unitedly for a certain time at a really hopeless task, even though with small success, God suddenly grants a new order of circumstances more favourable to the religious position. I present some dramatic cases.

Take that of the early Church which incurred the enmity of the greatest power on earth, the Roman Empire, a phase which lasted for nearly three hundred years. It seemed to pose an impenetrable barrier to the Church. But the unimaginable happened. The Emperor Constantine became a Christian and the Empire became the Church's propagator.

Then there is what I may call the partial case of Japan which, after hundreds of years of implacable opposition to the Church, came to the resolution in the 1930s to Catholicise the country. It took the first steps in that

direction, but the joyful prospect was aborted by the outbreak of World War II.

Another is the most strange case of China under Mao Tse-tung. After discovering that the Legion was exercising such an influence as to suggest that China was on the verge of an era of mass conversion, the government offered to make Catholicism the Church of China. It drew up a Constitution for that Church. But it did it in such a doubting spirit, interposing so many safeguards against a foreign domination as to interfere with the due autonomy of the Church, so that the Constitution had to be rejected. But certainly that is not the final act in the drama. What so drastic a regime as that of Mao was prepared to grant, will undoubtedly be improved on by some future administration. And so the day will dawn when that land of uncountable millions will not only reopen to the Church but will offer favourable circumstances.

Another instance would be Mexico after its conquest by Cortes. The Spaniards ardently sought to convert it and made every effort but the outraged people stood firm against. But then occurred the manifestation of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Within a few years the eight million inhabitants were in the Church.

The Philippines affords a case of a land lost to practice but in a single generation brought back to it by a really unified effort of the Mystical Body. Now it is the seat of a prodigious ambition of ours; that is a lead on to the conquest of Asia. Fr Aedan McGrath is out there at the moment in the pursuance of this purpose.

Miracles Help

A further example of the readiness of God to supplement inadequate human possibility would lie in Lourdes. From

the beginning of the Church one of the supports given to belief had been the working of miracles. Our Lord proved his claims by scattering them prodigally. Then the Church continued this feature through the miracle-working saints. About two hundred years ago atheism availed of the wondrous new world of expanding science to cast doubt on miracles. It alleged that they were no more than part of the as yet un-clarified region of science. As it was not practicable for an investigating entourage to accompany a saint, that argument was disastrously effective. The divine response was the perfect one of opening what we might with respect describe as a miracle-factory in Lourdes. It was then possible to establish there a scientific department which subjected claimed miracles to intensive scrutiny. Thus was the miraculous more than restored to its important role in Christianity. At the same time a new challenge was offered to the world under the auspices of Our Lady

Perhaps an even greater challenge has all the time been contained in the biblical phrase that they wrapped Jesus in a winding sheet and laid him in the tomb. As each succeeding age has produced more science, it has sought to use it against Catholic faith. But step by step God has so to speak unfolded that winding sheet and progressively shown forth all its hidden wonders as a complete confirmation of everything that is given to us in the four gospels. I am of course referring to the revelations which science itself has to draw from the periodic investigations of the Holy Shroud. Each new scientific discovery, which was expected to show up the Shroud as an imposture, has done the opposite by producing new evidence of its genuineness. Perhaps the very latest is the most confounding. It is the finding in the photography

of the Shroud of a Roman coin which was manufactured in Our Lord's time. We might be tempted to view this newest wonder as 'a keeping of the best wine to the last'. But the past has made us realise that the divine resources are inexhaustible and that the future will produce more marvels as they are needed.

Nuns as *Incolae*

I have tried to sketch out the problem of conversion as I see it. It is inconceivably great but not greater than God who has ordered it to be done. I have shown the ways he comes to the aid of the willing workers. I have already mentioned the fact that Fr McGrath is in the Philippines. He is there as the initial step towards the development of our *Incola Mariae* system. An *incola* is a legionary who for a term of not less than six months goes to some place of religious necessity, giving most free time to working for souls through the Legion. Already many have undertaken this service. The attempt to convert Iceland is based on a team consisting of a priest, a nun and about twelve *Incolae*. Therefore it is, even though on a small scale, a perfect exemplification of our new four-fold category of operation, the bishop being enthusiastic in his participation. This experience shows the possibilities of the *Incola* system. Of course an *Incola* should be a first-class legionary able to organise the Legion and even to animate a place which has no priest and to have things ready for the periodic visit of a priest. But should not every nun, if possessed of sufficient knowledge of the Legion, be a ready-made *Incola* of superior quality?

Have I been over-praising the Legion? I have not that intention. I would be afraid to do so. I give no more than I think to be due. The Legion is only an orderly but

complete and well-proportioned assembly of the common ingredients of the Catholic Church. Perhaps that correct assembly represents an achievement because it must not be taken for granted that a correct model of the Church is as readily available as the design of an aeroplane. A lot of the alleged patterns of the Church are sheer travesties lacking its most important elements, for instance, the parodies that would exhibit the Church without apostleship or without the Blessed Virgin.

But are such mockeries possible? Yes, not only possible but common. How many items that we would deem to be vital are being jettisoned by the present-day progressives in the Church? For example the angels, indulgences, the sacraments or the saints. The Legion holds firmly on to history by venerating all of them, finding them indeed of great value in its work, for example the Miraculous Medal.

I think it is not too much to claim that the Legion teaches its members all the important as well as the secondary doctrines of the Church, much of which is not ordinarily placed before the faithful. Among these I would mention the Mystical Body, the Blessed Virgin, apostleship and conversion.

It is for this comprehensive reason that the Legion has been taken up by providence as reflecting its idea. Pope John XXIII has put it just in that way. He has declared that the Legion presents the true face of the Catholic Church. Could a loftier praise be uttered by so high an authority in regard to a lay society?

Legion Produces Vocations

Incidentally I point to the fact that universally the Legion generates vocations. More attention to its gift in that direction would solve the problem.

These days will you aim at enlisting your full support behind the Legion as an efficacious means for converting the world and at the same time achieving the fullness of your own role. The difficulty which will present itself to your mind is that you have no time for anything so considerable. But that is just where the Legion enters in. It can turn you into a force in the world by a comparatively modest expenditure of your time. The Legion is a mechanism which multiplies you.

Widening Our Horizons

Recently we were listening to the report of the Icelandic PPC Party which reached the usual impressive height. Incidentally they furnished a vivid picture of the dozen Incolae who had been on the island with Fr Bradshaw for various periods. These Incolae have been leading lives of great hardship and of utter devotedness. The only work available to them has been tasks which the ordinary population will not stoop to. These occupy them during the day, after which they betake themselves to their labour of love, the quest for souls. The peregrine, not having thus to earn their bread gave all their time to the said quest.

But it is not the heroism of that enterprise that I am now considering but the mental approach which has characterised it. During the three years which Fr Bradshaw and his team of Incolae have been operating, they have learned much and there has been an evolution of thought in regard to method. This is of such importance that it is necessary to analyse it and see what lessons it has for the Legion.

the proposition. Perhaps it was that Japan was regarding Christianity from too low an angle, seeing no more in it than the best human code, the loftiest ethic. Whereas it is the divine requirement that faith must make at least a modest entry into every converting transaction. However, the world is still young, and God fulfils himself in many ways. Like the blind man in the Gospel, Japan may yet cry out: Whereas I was blind, now I see. I recognise the Church as Jesus Christ. And the scheme that failed in the 1930s may triumph a century later.

In the 1950s China played similarly with its destiny. It flirted with religion on kindred principles. It was willing to introduce the Church on selfish, human guarded lines which would leave it a shadow of itself. And this was not enough. Faith, the vital ingredient was missing. But China is too big to be left permanently in that impoverishment.

Moreover there is life germinating in the Chinese soul which must appear one day. The old saying has it that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. We do not rightly know how many martyrs we provided there thirty years ago. But we dare to put it at some forty thousand who were deprived of their lives by violence or by the slower slaughter of the prison. All that treasury of merit is waiting to play its predestined part someday.

According to the principle of the Mystical Body, the human agency is necessary to bring Jesus and Mary to souls. Reflecting on the remarkable things which they have deigned to do through the Legion, our effort to place ourselves at their disposal should be superhuman. We must plan in terms of every place and every man and be ready to follow up on that planning.

I would claim that the Concilium is really doing its best in this department of thinking and planning, but its

powers to make this effective is limited. It has to rely on all its related governing bodies to be no less concerned and to urge on all those under their influence. For the Legion is still working only at a fraction of its potentiality. Too many praesidia are still confining themselves to comforting and consoling while souls are going to shipwreck around them. Even where branches are thoroughly good, they are not ambitious to do more.

In this connection I point to the absolute necessity of using the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* and the *Exploratio Dominicalis*, both ingredients of heavenly value. They serve the double purpose of opening up new fields to the Legion and developing the Legion Spirit. Somehow or other every legionary must be made to think in terms of the whole world and of its grimmest problems.

Sighing for New Worlds to Conquer

I have discussed Iceland, Japan and China. It is breathtaking to reflect that our simple Legion has been providentially assigned a dramatic part in their destinies. But can we not see that likewise we have in regard to every country in the world. In almost all of them we exist in various stages of growth. In respect of the few from which we are still excluded, we can at least say that we are doing our very best to implant ourselves there. Nearly all of them are the theatre of annual peregrination projects. Soon every country will be sending forth such groups. An inevitable consequence of this will be that the horizons of legionaries will be widened. It was said of the Emperor Alexander the Great that he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. If the Legion could become that much involved in the winning of souls, it is certain that the Holy Spirit would fill it with his power and perhaps convert the

world. Actually this is the petition with which the Legion prayers begin. Therefore it is not altogether as a joke that I suggest that an atlas of the world might be a companion document to the handbook.

So we should set our minds roving and try to picture to ourselves the innumerable places where the Lord's injunction to preach the gospel still remains unfulfilled. Add on the million other areas where it is being fulfilled in a partial way only.

We are just now in correspondence with a group of islands in the Pacific. It contains three hundred islands of which perhaps half are inhabited and in part by Catholics. The minority of these islands would be dealt with by priests who circulate through them. This would provide the more earnest Catholics with the Mass and the sacraments periodically. It could hardly be expected to build up a devout life, nor could it convert.

Just imagine the coming in to one of those islands of a dependable *Incola Mariae* who would move constantly through the people between the coming of the priest. The heroism of the proceeding could not fail to stir the islanders and to ensure a hearing. It is certain that the priest would find special work waiting for him inclusive of conversions. A new project would exist.

The roots of the present lie deep in the past, it is said. It will be of interest to mention that when Edel Quinn began to recover after her breakdown in Lilongwe in 1941, our minds turned to the idea of using her on the less arduous mission of moving through the South Sea Islands trying to get the Legion going there. This notion was pushed aside by her return to Nairobi.

The Incolae

Incola Mariae is a more recent edition to the Legion vocabulary. In Latin it means a person making a stay in a country not his own. The Legion uses it to designate a member who for a limited period, a year more or less, goes to a place of spiritual necessity, supports himself there, and devotes to the Legion a large proportion of his free time. The sacrificial aspect of this is very great. The idea is catching on and many places have already shown how fruitful it can be.

We are beginning to dream dreams in regard to the development of this choice band. But everything depends on the careful administration of the idea, which presumes a very superior quality on the part of the Incola. Going among a strange people and facing grave problems, it is imperative that the Incola be a dedicated legionary capable of standing up to difficult circumstances and of providing leadership. In normal circumstances the Incola should not be deprived of the opportunity to attend Mass daily. Should the nature of the enterprise be such that this is impossible, then obviously the Incola should be one to whom the ecclesiastical authority would be willing to grant the privilege of Minister of the Eucharist. The contemplation of an Incola armed with this office opens up an entrancing vista of benefit to souls. In dealing with Iceland we have seen that Incolae assigned to Akureyri in the north of the island have been given this privilege. It has made their mission tolerable and has been a priceless boon to the few Catholic around them.

But of course we must not limit our gaze to islands. Any priest-less or problem-ridden place would be as much in need.

What of that case of the remote Andean village in South America which had not received the visit of a priest for several years. A PPC team with a priest went there and in little more than a week accomplished wonders. But then they had to depart. In desperation they set up a praesidium to keep things going. Word about this has not yet come to us but it is hard to imagine such an uninstructed body surviving in those primitive circumstances. If an Incola were available, that would make all the difference.

But is this realistic thinking? Can the Legion offer persons of the calibre that such missions would require? Well, I have been speaking of the Incolae in Iceland. Many of them would be adequate for anything. It may be that an equal load has not been thrown on the Incolae elsewhere in the world. But it looks not unlikely from the performance of the latter that they could rise to what we would place before them. I cannot think of a downright failure among the number who have hitherto served as Incolae. Unquestionably the experience thus far gained has amounted to a showing of the green light in respect of the Incola; that is we must go ahead with all our energy. At the same time we must keep ever before our minds the supreme requirement of quality and dedication. Places thinking of sending Incolae on difficult assignments should discuss the matter with the Concilium.

Holy Father Would be Pleased

An event of joy and significance took place some months ago. I am of course referring to the more than kindly reception given to the Concilium officers by His Holiness the Pope. Our three-quarters of an hour discussion with him equalled this talk in point of length. Likewise it covered much of the same ground. It was immediately evident

that His Holiness was completely informed in regard to everything in the Church, inclusive of the things which the Legion is handling. His whole attitude was gentle and approving. We could not but get the impression that he was unreservedly in agreement with our method. He urged us to remain ever true to our love of Our Blessed Lady. He insisted that it is the divine arrangement that victory comes through her. No difficulty of language entered in to lessen the sheer enjoyment of that audience. For the Pope's English was quite perfect in its quality.

I really believe that Pope John Paul would derive an immensity of pleasure from being among us at this conference. I think it would reflect his own mind as to what he would wish to see in the whole Church. I think your standards would satisfy him; your unreserved dependence on Our Blessed Mother, your reaching out to souls everywhere, your wonderful self-sacrifice, and your good humour. I am sure that he would feel in you a reflection of his own spirit. As all of you were able to judge from his visit to this country, his personality would not overwhelm you, but would on the contrary be a pure encouragement.